

Mount St Helens

When Mount St Helens erupted in the US in 1980, we saw a volcano erupt sideways for the first time. The eruption begins with a landslide – the side of the mountain collapses.

Sudden depressurization of the magma chamber triggers an explosive eruption – like uncorking a champagne bottle.

This sideways explosion is a **lateral blast**. The explosion cloud raced over the ground at over 300 mph, travelling over hills and valleys, destroying an area twice the size of Birmingham in just 3 minutes.

The volcano explodes sideways.

Mount St Helens was the first big volcanic disaster of modern times – it was filmed and photographed with modern cameras. Scientists were able to see the eruption as it happened, and it changed the way we study volcanoes. Today, there is a permanent volcano observatory at Mount St Helens, equipped with many new instruments to help monitor volcanic activity.

The eruption released 1600 times more thermal energy than the Hiroshima nuclear bomb.

