

**Thousands of people have fled an erupting volcano in the USA state of California. Mt. Kiko exploded into life around midday on Friday spreading ash, dust and lava across the local area. 18 people are feared to have perished during the event.**

Mt. Kiko has been dormant for 23 years since it's last explosion. There had been signs of the mountains awakening weeks before. Locals had spotted faint smoke clouds seeping from the the crater but no one had taken much notice. However, yesterday the volcano awoke from its slumber and erupted at apporximatly 1.30pm (US time). A dramatic explosion catapulted a huge ash cloud 2 miles into the air, whilst lava was projected down the hillside. Molten rock then proceeded to ooze down towards houses and residential areas. Moments later, the dark eerie sky began to rain dust and ash on the local town, covering houses, offices and shops. The eruption lasted for over an hour before Mt. Kiko fell silent once again.

Buildings were covered in scorching ash, which built up like snow. There were also reports of roofs colapsing in on innocent civilians. Many crops have been lost due to the ash suffocating them, whilst the lava flow started many forest fires. Animals fled their habbitats which have now been completely destroyed by the charging pyroclastic flow. The ash also tore through a small mountain community causing many serious casulties and fatalities. "We heard the explosion and immediately darted for our cellar!" stated one witness. "Our home has been completely destroyed but we are greatful to be alive."

Emergency services acted fast to the disaster. Ambulances, fire engines and helicopters were all deployed to help the rescue effort. Firemen and women fought the forest fires which have mostly been defeated. Both locals and emergency services worked thoughout the afternoon dealing with the injured and trying to free trapped people in collapsed buildings. Moments after the disaster, Barack Obama appeared on live television stating his sympathy for the residents and pledged to do as much as he could to help wit the recovery.

This morning, residents of the local town (Chadderton) are waking up in shock to what has happened. People are wondering why government official did not cll for an evacuation earlier and Scientists are being blamed for not reading the warning signs quicker. The red cross are sending in volunteers to support the clear up and the homeless whilst the American government are sening in army units to help with the town's recovery.