



# DAM FAILURE

Dam failures or levee breaches present a significant hazard, often occurring rapidly and with limited warning. These events can result in severe flash flooding, causing substantial property damage and potential loss of life.



## Causes

- **Severe Weather:** Intense storms, including thunderstorms and hurricanes, can overwhelm structures.
- **Snowmelt:** Rapid accumulation of melted snow can exceed capacity.
- **Debris Jams:** Obstructions formed by debris can increase water pressure.
- **Geological Events:** Landslides and volcanic eruptions can compromise structural integrity.
- **Wildfires:** Fire can weaken dam/levee materials
- **Human Actions:** Civil disturbance or acts of terrorism can cause intentional or unintentional damage.

## Dam Failure: Areas at Risk, Preparedness & Response

### Areas at Risk:

- **Downstream Location:** Determine if your home or workplace is downstream from a dam and within a designated evacuation zone.
- **Hazard Designation:** Dams are categorized by potential risk:
- **High Hazard:** Failure likely results in loss of life & major property damage.
- **Significant Hazard:** Failure *could* cause loss of life & property damage.
- **Low Hazard:** Failure unlikely to cause loss of life or property damage.

### How to Prepare:

- **Emergency Kit:** Assemble a kit with essential supplies for all family members.
- **Evacuation Plan:** Establish a family evacuation procedure and communication plan.

### What to Do During a Dam Failure (If Evacuated):

- **Stay Informed:** Monitor radio or TV for updates.
- **Evacuate Immediately (if ordered):**
- Take essential items only.
- Shut off utilities (gas, electricity, water) & disconnect appliances.
- Fill your vehicle's gas tank.
- **Avoid Floodwaters:** Do NOT Walk or drive through moving water (6" can cause loss of control).
- Follow designated evacuation routes – expect heavy traffic.

### What to Do During a Dam Failure (If NOT Evacuated):

- **Monitor:** Stay tuned to emergency radio/TV broadcasts.
- **Await Instructions:** Listen to further guidance.
- **Prepare to Relocate:** Be ready to evacuate to a shelter or safe location if your home is damaged.

## What to Do After a Dam Failure:

- **Water Safety:** Listen to reports regarding water contamination.
- **Avoid Floodwaters:** Stay clear of both standing and moving floodwaters – they may be contaminated and deceptively deep.
- **Downed Power Lines:** Be aware of and avoid downed power lines.
- **Road Hazards:** Avoid roads with receding floodwaters – they may be structurally compromised.
- **Building Safety:** Exercise extreme caution when entering buildings – unseen damage may exist.
- **Sanitation:** Clean and disinfect all items touched by floodwater due to potential contamination.
- **Personnel Reporting (Military/Government Personnel):** Once safe, report to your command and <https://adpaas.army.mil/>.

## Where to Find Additional Information

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):
  - <https://www.fema.gov/why-dams-fail>
  - <https://www.ready.gov/floods>
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) National Inventory of Dams: <https://nid.sec.usace.army.mil/>
- Association of State Dam Safety Officials: <https://damsafety.org/>
- Ready Army: <https://www.army.mil/ready>

It's up to you. Prepare strong. Get an emergency supply kit with enough supplies for at least three days, make an emergency plan with your family and be informed about what might happen. These fact sheets are intended to supplement predetermined plans and policies. Follow state, local, installation and command guidance related to threats and hazards.

