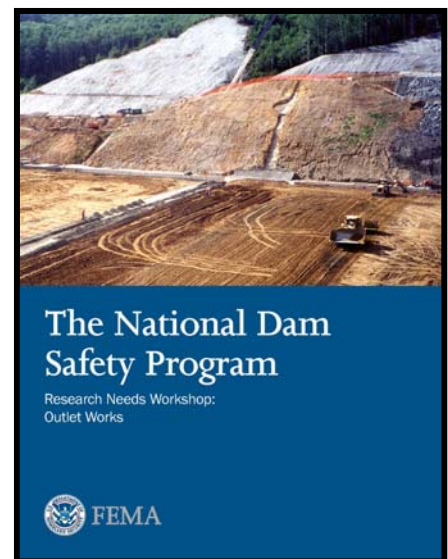
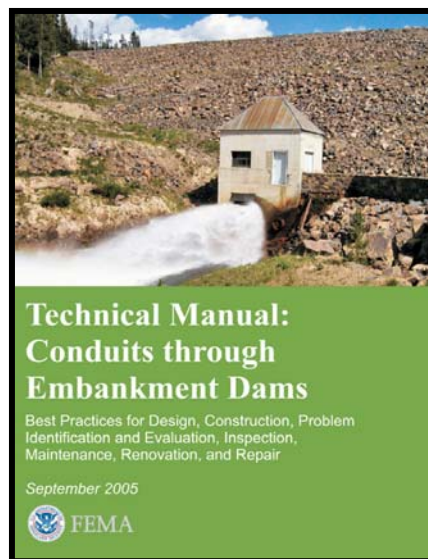
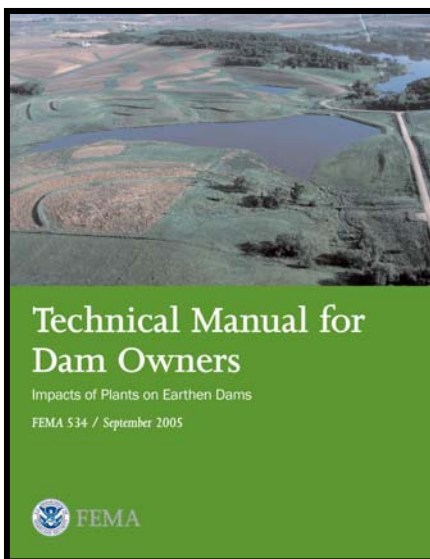


RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Water Operation and Maintenance Bulletin

No. 226



In This Issue . . .

FEMA Dam Safety Publications Just a Click Away

Lenthalls Dam Gates Failure 2008 – A Case Study in Gate Reliability and
Human Factors, Failure to Implement Risk Management Procedure



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

December 2008

This *Water Operation and Maintenance Bulletin* is published quarterly for the benefit of water supply system operators. Its principal purpose is to serve as a medium to exchange information for use by Bureau of Reclamation personnel and water user groups in operating and maintaining project facilities.

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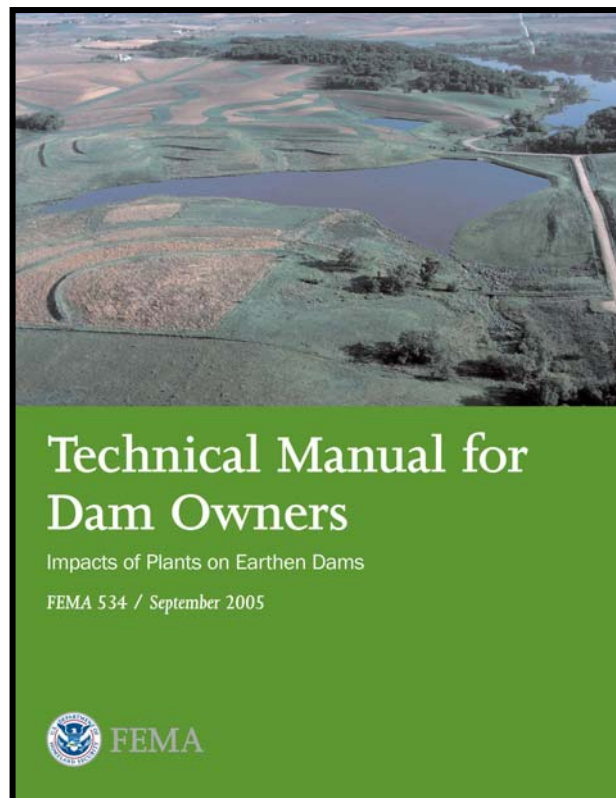
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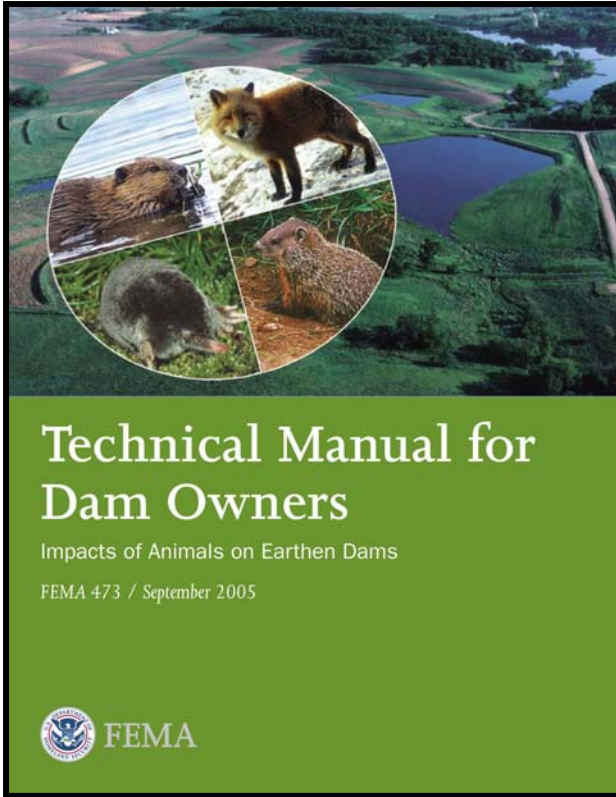
FEMA Dam Safety Publications Just a Click Away

Bureau of Reclamation staff and water users may not be completely aware of some of the recent FEMA dam safety publications that can be downloaded from their Web site at <www.fema.gov>. All one has to do for access is select the Publications link on the left side of the Web site, then when the next page appears, either search by publication number title or subject. The key technical manuals are FEMA 534, FEMA 473, and FEMA 484.

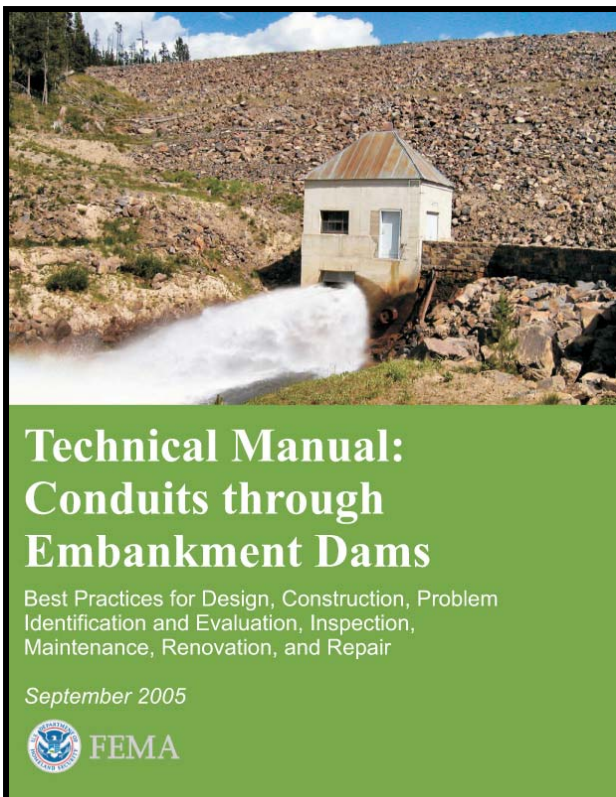
FEMA 534, Technical Manual for Dam Owners – Impacts of Plants on Earthen Dams, was published in September 2005 (115 pages). It contains a survey of all the problems with tree and woody vegetation growth from the various State dam safety offices (Alabama and Delaware did not respond to the survey). General information is provided on tree growth and tree root development requirements, and earthen dam safety inspection and methodology is also described. Zones for controlling tree and woody vegetation growth on earthen dams are presented to assist dam owners in prioritizing the most critical areas of a dam where trees and woody

vegetation should be removed. Dam remediation and design considerations offer guidance on removal and repair of areas affected by trees and woody vegetation growth. The economics of proper vegetation maintenance presents the costs associated with the various methods used to control or prevent unwanted vegetation of dams.



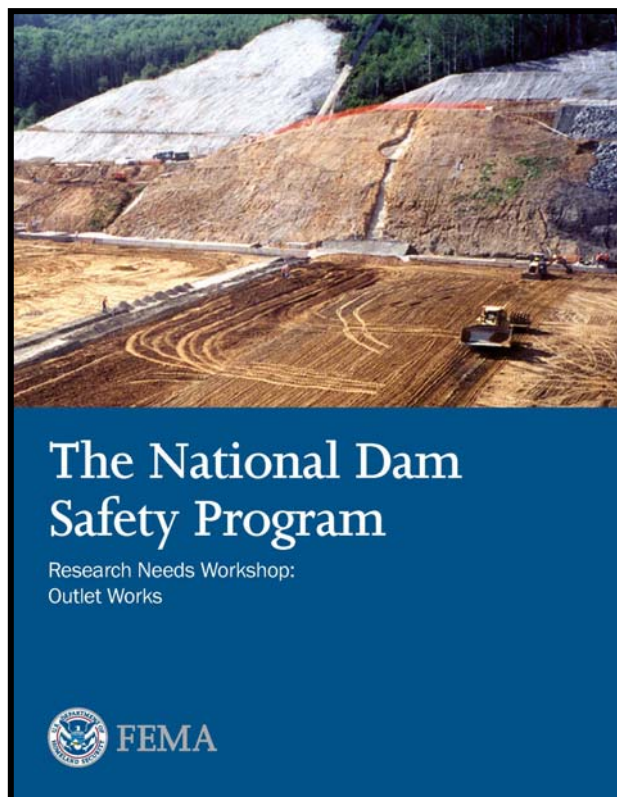
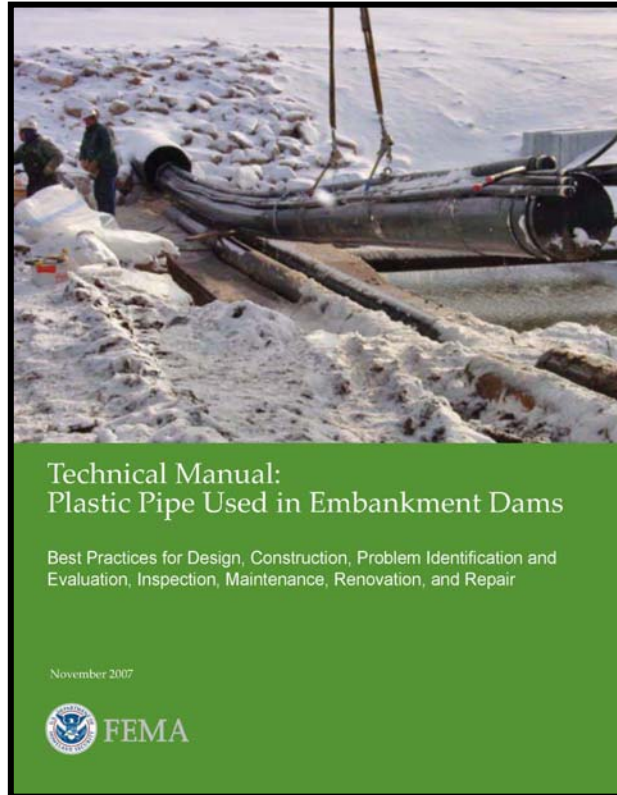


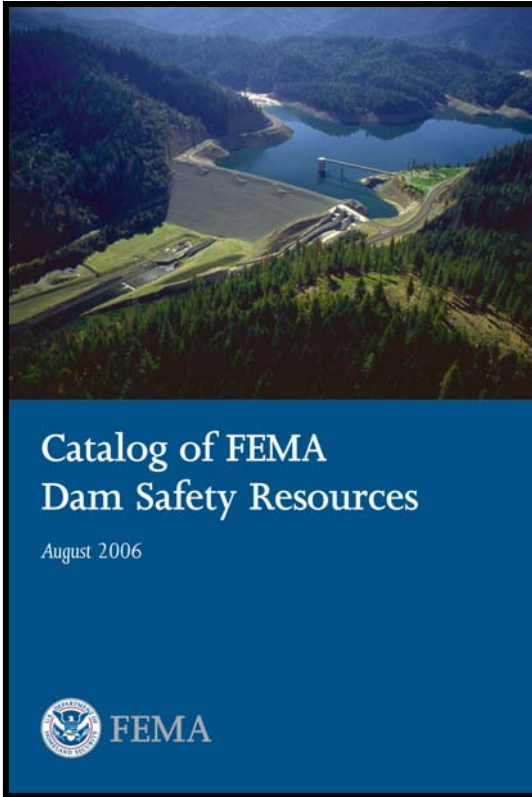
FEMA 473, Technical Manual for Dam Owners – Impacts of Animals on Earthen Dams, was also published in September 2005 (122 pages). Habitat and control methods for the various species are discussed in this publication.



FEMA 484, Conduits through Embankment Dams, was also published in September 2005 (614 pages). The Technical Service Center was a major contributor to the content of this publication.

Other recent publications include the following:





For additional publications, there is the Catalog of FEMA - Dam Safety Resources, published in August 2006 (20 pages).

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Lenthalls Dam Gates Failure 2008 – A Case Study in Gate Reliability and Human Factors, Failure to Implement Risk Management Procedure

by Damian Carstens

Disclaimer: This article was reprinted with permission. Note that the spelling of the dam name was corrected, acronyms were defined at their first use, and minor punctuation changes have been made for readability. Additions, if any, are indicated with brackets.

Abstract

The city of Hervey Bay is a growing tourist community that is located a comfortable 3.5 hour drive north from Brisbane. To meet growing water demands in the community, Wide Bay Water Corporation (WBWC) required the raising of its water supply – Lenthalls Dam.

Queensland (QLD) Dam owners are aware of their obligation to manage their dams to minimise adverse environmental impacts and public risk.

In 2002, Tim Waldron, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) [of] WBWC, KD Murray and Allan Crichton, Principal Dam Engineer, Gutteridge Haskins & Davies (GHD), published a study of options for the increase of Lenthalls Dam. The paper is titled *Raising Lenthalls Dam – A Case Study in New Technology and the Environment*. This publication referenced the final choice chosen for the dam increase: 2m crest gates to raise the full supply level to Australian Height Datum (AHD)26. A gated system was seen as beneficial in meeting post winter flood objectives.¹

The dam is assessed as Failure Impact Assessment Category 2, population at risk 270, not including upstream population and upstream state forest recreational users. The relevant standard is QLD Dam Safety Management Guidelines, February 2002.

The Lenthalls Dam Crest gates were installed in 2007 and failed to operate as designed from January 2008. In February 2008, high rainfall led to a moderate flood event, [and] all gates [were] inoperable. The gates failed to lower [and therefore] to release flood water.

¹ Tim Waldron, KD Murray, and Allan Crichton. *Raising Lenthalls Dam – A Case Study in New Technology and the Environment*. Dam Infrastructure Technology Review, Wide Bay Water, Hervey Bay: IPWEA, 2002.

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In this incident, manual operation of the gates did not occur [because] it was believed [that] the mechanism was not operable. The operating authority failed to implement the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and failed to evacuate flood impacted upstream sites. Three persons were put at risk due to upstream flooding. Had the flooding been more prolonged or severe, the persons trapped faced injury or death.

Australia has a strong reputation with respect Dam Safety and Incident management, [and] this near fatal incident offers an opportunity to review and amend existing Dam Safety Requirements, Risk Management and Gate Reliability Criteria [etc.].

This incident provides the Australian National Committee on Large Dams (ANCOLD) with an opportunity to review all current guidelines and enhance Dam Safety standards with emphasis on the importance of mitigating human failure and ensuring public safety.

Introduction

Emergency Management Plans and arrangements are designed to treat residual risk and this is their place in the process.² It is clearly evident that the Dam Owner/Operator, Regulators, Community and Emergency Management Planners need to establish clear communication.

Reducing consequences can be achieved by workable functioning evacuation plans and warning systems³ that seem[ed] to be absent in the Lenthalls Dam February 2008 incident.

Human behavior is an important consideration in the management of Dam Failure risk: “. . . simple mistakes, operational, mismanagement, unnecessary oversights, or destructive intent can interact with other hazards to compound the possibility of failure.”⁴

This case study considers the Human Failures that contributed to the upstream flood risk in the Lenthalls Dam Failure February 2008. To what extent did a failure to follow Lenthalls Dam EAP requirements enhance the risks posed to the public?

² Dam Safety Risk Treatments, Steve Warren, *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 2001.

³ Dam Safety Risk Treatments, *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, Steve Warren, Victoria State Emergency Service.

⁴ Indiana Department of Natural Resources Dam Safety Inspection Manual 280803.

It is in the public interest to ask a series of questions regarding the implementation of the EAP during the February 2008 event and the draft format of the EAP when the Lenthalls Dam Incident occurred.

- Is it acceptable that the EAP was in draft when the Lenthalls Dam Gate Failure occurred?
- Is it acceptable that the section of the EAP titled affected landholders was blank?
- Is it acceptable that the regulator approved the dam increase and gates whilst still waiting on key compliance requirements to be met?
- How could it be that the crest gate system chosen got the seal plate and gate seal clearance so wrong?
- Is it acceptable that prior to the Lenthalls Dam Failure Incident upstream landholders were not contacted, consulted or briefed as to the circumstances in which evacuation would occur?
- Should members of the public exposed to such a risk be relocated prior to construction, thereby eliminating many of the risks faced and alleviating the constructing authority from the more onerous aspects of risk management, liability and negligence exposure?
- Despite assurances by WBWC that the gates were to operate automatically and lower at lower water levels after the February 2008 event, the gates did not operate automatically. In fact, one was lowered manually, and the rest did not lower manually despite water levels lowering. How is it that the dam operator was so uninformed during the incident regarding the operational and risks of failure in flood that they could not provide the regulator with accurate information?

To what extent would a strict adherence to the requirements in the EAP have minimised the risks posed to members of the public isolated by flood waters?

In light of the Lenthalls Dam Gate Failure Incident, Water Infrastructure Operators and Risk Managers should now address the changes required to be made to Dam Safety Risk Management and Dam Safety Requirements to ensure that future Dam Failure Incidents in Australia do not occur. In the event of an incident, steps must now be taken to ensure that EAP requirements are consistently adhered to.

Background

Lenthalls Dam was constructed in 1983-1984 to supply water to the Hervey Bay City Council area. The capacity of the storage is 17,256 million litres (ML) for a Full Supply Level (FSL) at 24.0m AHD.

The existing dam consists of a zoned earthfill embankment, which is approximately 350 metres long. The elevation of the embankment crest is 34.0 metres AHD. The mass concrete ogee spillway is located on the right bank and is a 75 metres wide energy dissipation channel, tapering over a distance of approximately 95 metres.

Two weirs downstream of Lenthalls, Burrum Number 1 (AMTD 23.3 km and Burrum Number 2 AMTD 28.2 km) complete the in river distribution system, which diverts water from Lenthalls Dam to water treatment plants.

The storage capacity for Lenthalls Dam is based on photogrammetric mapping. The catchment covers 500km², with the majority of the flow generated by the two tributaries Doongul and Logbridge Creek.

To ensure that there is adequate water supply for the future needs of Hervey Bay region, it was proposed that the FSL of Lenthalls Dam be raised by two metres from its existing FSL of 24.0m AHD to 26.0m AHD. This provided an additional 11,150 ML of storage.⁵

In December 2007, the full supply level was raised 2m using Crest Gates. The Crest Gate is a patented system produced by Flowgate Projects (Pty) Ltd, South Africa.⁶

The Lenthalls Dam Raising Design Report⁷ describes the construction as 2m Crest Gates comprising “. . . 4 no. 14.8 m wide gates and 1 no. 9.8m wide gate (total length of spillway crest reduced from 75.3m to 69m). The crest gates open by moving downwards.

The gates failed to operate as designed from January 2008; the Principal Dam Gate Failure Incident occurred in 2008. Rectification work on the Crest Gates is still underway at the time of writing.

⁵ Raising Lenthalls Dam – A Case Study in New Technology and the Environment, Tim Waldron, Wide Bay Water Corporation; KD Murray, Sun Water; and Allan Crichton, GHD. 2002.

⁶ Raising Lenthalls Dam – A Case Study in New Technology and the Environment Tim Waldron, KD Murray, and Allan Crichton. 2002.

⁷ 411/16039/00/60817 February 2006.

Individuals at Risk

- 270 individuals downstream
- 12 individuals upstream (approx not included in EAP) and unknown numbers of campers at Wongi Campsite

At the time of the incident, 3 individuals were isolated by rising flood waters at a farm house upstream. Those cut off by rising upstream floodwaters were not initially aware of the Gate Failure Incident and were not notified by the Dam Operator, WBWC.

Lenthalls Dam Gate Failure February 2008 - The Incident

The incident is best described by the Dam Operator, WBWC. The following is quoted from correspondence, 10 March WBWC to Principal Engineer (Dam Safety) Water Industry Regulation, Department of Natural Resources QLD (Author Peter Care, Director, Engineering Consultancy Services [WBWC]).

- On the 29th [of] January, WBWC staff were successful in opening (lowering) the centre and smallest gate installed on the dam structure water level at the time was 25.44m. The dam designers were notified at the time.

Author Note: It is unclear if this Incident was reported to Dam Safety at the time. When Dam Safety were contacted on the 14th of February, the regulator was not aware that the gates were not operable (manually or otherwise). This would constitute an incident.

- On the 5th of February 2008, heavy rainfall in the Lenthalls Dam catchment resulted in the dam water level exceeding RL26 and overtopping the crest gates.
- By [the] 6th of February, the dam water level had reached RL26.55m and none of the five gates had opened as designed. The first gate should have opened at 26.15, with each gate opening at 50mm reservoir levels.
- On the 11th [of] February, the dam water level had dropped to 26.20m with still no gates opening. The Crest Gate Designers, GHD, attended the site to view the gate in operation.

Author Note: The affected land holders and individuals were not notified of the gate malfunction in the continuing rain event.

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- Continued heavy rainfall in the catchment resulted in the dam level reaching 27.41 on the 12th of February with **no gates opening**. GHD and their sub-consultant Flowgate Projects from South Africa were notified of the events. WBWC was notified by GHD that there was potential for all gates to drop of their own accord if the dam levels exceeded 27.55 and that the smallest gate may drop as water levels receded.

Author Note: The EAP called for evacuation after water levels reached RL26.91, and no evacuation of the affected public occurred. There was no public announcement of risk or the need to evacuate.

- On the 16th of January 2008 around midday, the smallest gate opened and remained down for about 15 hours to release flows down the Burrum River. The gate closed automatically at the correct, now reduced reservoir level.
- On the 18th of February, GHD and WBWC were able to open Gate 1, adjacent to the walkway, with the assistance of a hydraulic jack. Once open, the gate responded normally to manual control and closed without incident within 15 minutes of operating the manual control valve.
- GHD and Flowgate Projects staff attended the site on [the] 25th [of] February to determine the cause of the gate's failure to open as designed. Gate 1 was lowered again with the assistance of a hydraulic jack, which established that the primary cause of the inoperability was due to the seal friction as a result of the high pressure exerted on the gate seals. An external load of approximately 600kg was sufficient to operate the gate and allow the gate to lower. Subsequent operation was achieved with 200kg of external load. The gate outlet was adjusted to reduce the flow out of the gate and increase the volume of water within the gate during filling to increase the opening weight of the gate and allow it to lower. This was [a trial run], and Gate 1 operated without any external assistance.
- The outlets for each of the five gates have subsequently been adjusted to allow automatic operation along with the lowering of the emergency inlet weirs to ensure complete buoyancy tank filling at a lower water level.

Author Note: This does not seem [to be] an accurate reflection of the situation as the gates did not lower, and it was not possible to lower them automatically. The gates did not automatically open [in a] subsequent event in June 2008, and there is evidence to suggest [that] the gates could not be manually lowered in June 2008.

- Measurements of the gap between the spillway lintel seal plates and the seal clamping plate on each gate confirmed that the compression of the seal is greater than calculated during the design stage.

Author Note: Why wasn't this discovered at final certification?

- During the repeated operation of Gate 1, the movement of the gate was carefully observed, and the gate, once clear of the seal plate, moved easily and freely. Gate closure after closing of the manual control valve is consistent and without incident.
- GHD and Flowgate Projects are presently evaluating options for adjusting the current gate arrangement in the short term to ensure reliable operation of the gates and in the long term to provide a permanent solution to prevent high load on the lintel seal. The long term solution may require the dam level to be below RL24.0m or the installation of stop logs on the dam crest to allow modification to be made.

Author Note: Gates still under repair manual lowering is believed impeded.

Immediately prior to the February 2008 [incident, the] Lenthalls Dam water level was at FSL RL26. The January rain had filled the catchment.

It is believed that the Crest Gates installed were inoperable from the date of installation. The recorded peak water level at Lenthalls Dam was RL27.4 on 12 February 2008.

Properties and the Wongi Water Hole Campground are directly upstream from the impoundment where the Burrum River is joined by tributaries Doongul Creek and Lenthalls Dam. Raised water levels in this location caused by flooding and gate failure are a significant risk as egress from these sites is impeded by cut roads in flood events.

The affect of the Lenthalls Dam Gate failure was upstream flooding (to higher levels than recorded at the impoundment wall), roads were cut off and water rose around the residence where 3 individuals were stranded. The flood level, 1.4m over the seized gates, was higher than modelling for previous incidents recorded in the EAP but not much lower than publicly documented [in] historical flood incidents.

Risk Management and Incident Reporting Requirements

At the time of the Incident in February 2008, the Lenthalls Dam Emergency Action Plan was still in Draft, and the affected land holders contact section was blank. The requirements in that Lenthalls Dam EAP were:

- *Reservoir Level is approaching RL26.5 and further rain is forecast or reservoir is rising, check all gates are open when reservoir level reaches 26.5. If all gates are not opened operate manually the gates in order to open those*⁸
- *Reservoir Level is approaching RL26.91 and further rain is forecast or reservoir is rising (Historical Peak 26.91... The major flooding will prompt the evacuation of many houses ... Declare a Major Flood Incident, advise the CEO, WBW of status and evacuation process... Continue to advise the CEO, WBW that the evacuation is in process*⁹

The Dam Safety Condition Schedule Lenthalls Dam (#309) stated:

“.2 where the reservoir headwaters are such that inundation of any upstream dwellings is likely, such dwellings must be considered in the preparation of any action Emergency Action Plan.” The current EAP at the time of the incident did not consider upstream dwellings.

“The EAP must cover the potential failure of any part of the structure that can put a population at risk either upstream or downstream. The emergency events described in the EAP shall cover those events as outlined in the Queensland Dam Safety Management Guidelines – February 2002, and include such failure modes as:c. Failure of control structures such as intake works, outlet works and gated spillways i. loss of one and all gates in a sunny day event, ii) Loss of one and all gates in a flood event.

*4. Inundation mapping shall be developed as outlined in Queensland Dam Safety Management Guidelines – Feb 2002 and shall be of sufficiently large a scale so as to easily identify those areas subject to possible danger.”*¹⁰

⁸ Lenthalls Dam Emergency Action Plan Table 5.6 41/16885/02/358620.

⁹ Lenthalls Dam Emergency Action Plan Table 5.7 41/16885/02/358620.

¹⁰ Dam Safety Condition Schedule Lenthalls Dam Condition Schedule.doc NRW.

It was noted that in the event of an emergency, “*the dam operator must notify the Chief Executive, Natural Resources and Water within forty-eight (48) hours. The notification shall include a brief description of the event and the time of activation of the Emergency Action Plan. It was noted in*”¹¹.

It was noted in the Lenthalls Dam Safety Conditions Audit Report that “*The biggest issue for Wide Bay Water (WBW) is the lack of systems/ staff for operating the dam with the commencement of wet season so WBW should give priority to finalise this O&M manual and train staff to operate and maintain the equipment.*” “*There is no record of any past inspections carried out on the Dam, with the completion of the Dam upgrade works Annual inspections should be carried out for 2008*”¹²

It is in the public interest to ask why Lenthalls Dam was given approval and commissioned if these issues were unaddressed.

How is it [that] the Dam Safety Regulator was told on initial enquiry with WBWC that the gates were not commissioned (i.e., were in the lowered flow release position rather than commissioned) and unable to release flow?

Human Factors: Failure to Implement Risk Management Procedures as Required by Lenthalls Dam Emergency Action Plan

The Lenthalls Dam operator did not follow EAP procedures when the gates failed. After the water reached RL26.5, it was not possible to manually lower [the] gates.¹³ Water levels reached 27.4, [and] no evacuation was carried out as required in the Lenthalls Dam Emergency Action Plan Table 5.7 41/16885/02/358620. Affected members of the public were not notified of the gate failure or of the risk, not surprising when this section (Affected Landholders) was blank in the only draft of the document available.

- Both Tables 5.6 and 5.7 require the notification of State Emergency Services (SES) and police. Members of the public contacted police at Maryborough and SES at the time of [the] emergency, [but] they did not know there was a problem with the Lenthalls gate operation or that individuals were isolated in rising floodwater upstream.

¹¹ Page 6 section 11 Dam Safety Condition Schedule Lenthalls Dam Condition Schedule.doc NRW.

¹² Page 10 Lenthalls Dam Wide Bay Water Dam Safety Audit 2007 Natural Resources and Water QLD Govt.

¹³ Lenthalls Dam Emergency Action Plan Table 5.6 41/16885/02/358620.

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- The version of the EAP in February 2008 did not have a section covering “*the potential failure of any part of the structure that can put a population at risk either **upstream** or downstream.*”

The EAP in existence in February 2008 did not seem to address in detail steps to deal with a gate failure in a flood event even though tables in the document addressed possible levels should this occur. The EAP did not have any mention of **upstream** flood risk or methods of evacuation should this occur.

It is apparent that the affected upstream public and stakeholders were not consulted when GHD compiled the Lenthalls Dam Emergency Action Plan, and it is recommended that greater consultation and openness be a requirement in the compilation of EAPs. The provision of Inundation mapping for flood and dam failure and consultation [during] preconstruction may well have eliminated the risks to upstream individuals entirely.

Local knowledge can contribute to a greater understanding of flows into a catchment when historical recorded data are not available. It must be a requirement of future Dam planning and Dam safety planning that this knowledge be included in modelling and tested against the hypothesis and conclusions in the modelling of probable dam failure and flood incidents.

It is recommended that when Dam Infrastructure is planned, EAPs are complete and Dam Safety requirements are met before the infrastructure is installed and operational. Suitably trained staff must be in employ prior to installation/ completion rather than at some later point.

Risk Assessments and Risk Assessment Trees are no substitute for commonsense on behalf of the constructing authority and Dam operator. Sometimes, a simple cost/benefit analysis will provide a solution. If individuals face significant harm in the event of a failure, and a cost/benefit analysis reveals a low cost solution (compared with the overall project and liability risk over the life time of the infrastructure), then this low cost solution must be taken up. Relocating upstream parties prior to construction would have eliminated the majority of the risks faced. Due to the low upstream population, this could have been achieved at minimal cost – why was this option rejected by a well funded constructing authority, [and] why does the dam operator reject this option now, the risks are unchanged.

The risks faced by the public were greatly enhanced in the February 2008 incident as documents (EAP) were incomplete and processes were not followed (no evacuation undertaken).

In the interests of public safety, it must be asked if between July 2007 and February 2008, given identified issues of *lack of systems / staff for operating the dam*,¹⁴ any steps had been taken to address the inadequacies identified by Dam Safety Natural Resources and Water.

It must be asked [if] public safety [would] be enhanced if the regulator was better resourced to penalise and take action against Dam Operators who don't comply with the requirements set out.

It might be asked if Building Industry Regulators have a legislated capacity to apply punitive action, why doesn't the regulator of Dam Safety in this specific instance 270 persons are at risk and the infrastructure is significant. What is the QLD government doing about this?

The Lenthalls Dam Gate Failure February 2008 Incident provides an opportunity for further investigation and greater understanding of how it is that a well resourced Dam operator (WBWC) could fail to follow the recommendations made by Natural Resources and Water QLD within the time frames.

This situation may well have added to the Human Failures that magnified the risk posed by individuals when the gate infrastructure failed.

It is vital to consider that the results of the gate failure and associated human factors were minimised by the cessation of rain, not by any action taken by the operator or the regulator or emergency services. Luck was the critical factor in the lack of injury or fatality this is unacceptable.

The public has a high expectation of infrastructure managers and, in this case, the public expectation was not met, worse could have happened.

Dam Safety NRW QLD are continuing to monitor the situation and can provide more details:

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www.nrw.qld.gov.au

¹⁴ Page 10 Lenthalls Dam Wide Bay Water Dam Safety Audit 2007 Natural Resources and Water QLD Govt.

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