

Why is visitors center costing so much?

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How long has the federal government been at this business of building things? Two hundred-plus years? So why is construction of the Hoover Dam visitors center running \$87 million over budget, and why is Bureau of Reclamation Director Daniel P. Beard saying that "we have to change our reporting procedures and internal controls so we never have another out-of-control project like the Hoover Dam visitor center"?

Why, after all this time, after a multitude of projects, are reporting procedures and internal controls so inadequate? Why did money just keep pouring into the project until two southern Nevada utilities complained because their customers were being billed for the extra costs?

An audit of the project says that the original 1983 estimate did not reflect the cost of simultaneously accommodating construction at the dam site, highway traffic, tourists and continuing operations of the dam and power plant. There were other problems, too, all of which led to gross underestimates of the cost. But these seem to be simple things. It does not take a genius to conclude that all of these costs needed to be taken into consideration. So why the overrun?

After a few moments of anger, most Americans will simply shake their heads and say, "Well, that's Washington." In a sense, this is true: pork barrel, incompetence and cost overruns (such as the highly expensive hammers, etc. bought by the Defense Department) seem to be a staple of the national government. But it is not enough to say that this is a way of life and let it go at that. This is our money; it is being wasted shamefully; and every American must demand that prudence and common sense find a place in this incredible bureaucracy. After all this time, they should start doing things right.