

Reclamation Manual

Policy

Subject:	Decisions Related to Dam Safety Issues
Purpose:	To establish responsibilities for making decisions to resolve dam safety issues in the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), indicate the procedure for assignment of responsibilities for decision making, direct procedures and requirements for documentation, and ensure a decision is made on each issue in a timely manner. The benefit of this Policy is to ensure timely documented decisions on Reclamation actions to address each identified dam safety issue.
Authority:	Reclamation Project Act of 1902 (32 Stat. 388) and supplementary Acts; Reclamation Safety of Dams Act of 1978 (Pub. L. 95-578, 92 Stat. 2471), as amended; and Departmental Manual Part 753, Dam Safety and Security Program.
Approving Official:	Commissioner
Contact:	Director, Dam Safety and Infrastructure, 86-67000

1. Introduction.

- A. Reclamation dams and appurtenant works are high energy structures that present risks to Reclamation and district employees and to the public. Because the resolution of dam safety issues has an impact on personnel and public safety, the individuals responsible for decision making need to be appropriately identified, and the decisions need to be appropriately documented and communicated. The processes described in this Policy require collaboration, establish accountability, and enhance communication among Reclamation groups during decision making.
- B. Dam safety issues may be identified as Reclamation operates, maintains, monitors, inspects, or analyzes a structure. The response by Reclamation to such issues may be to monitor, inspect, analyze, or otherwise address the issue while continuing to operate the structure. Some issues may require Reclamation to take additional actions such as changing operations and/or moving aggressively to modify the structure to reduce risk.
- C. Issues may be resolved through various programs and authorities. Assigning responsibility for decision making is appropriate to ensure issues are addressed quickly. Processes will ensure the regional director, area manager, and Chief, Dam Safety Office (DSO), will receive copies of all decision documents.

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2. Applicability.

- A. This Policy applies to decisions related to dam safety-related investigations, inspections, evaluations, and need for corrective action. Reclamation's Safety of Dams Act of 1978, as amended, (SOD Act) provides authority for Reclamation to modify structures or take other actions to reduce dam safety-related risk. Authorizations of dam safety-related structural modifications under the SOD Act are retained by the Commissioner in accordance with Paragraph 6.O.(2)(c) of the Reclamation Manual (RM) *Delegations of Authority*.
- B. This Policy applies to all Reclamation personnel and offices having jurisdiction and oversight responsibility for high and significant hazard potential dams that are either owned by Reclamation or included as part of an authorized Reclamation project. This Policy establishes responsibilities and requirements for decision making related to dam safety issues. Dam safety issues included in this Policy are issues related to a specific dam or facility. A decision is required for each issue. Procedures for identifying, communicating, and documenting decisions are described in Paragraph 4 below.
- C. Processes used in day-to-day activities that provide technical input (e.g., risk analysis) and task and resource management (e.g., project plans) in support of dam safety work are described in guidance provided by DSO and the Technical Service Center. Day-to-day operations and management of emergencies at facilities are prescribed in official documents including Standing Operating Procedures and Emergency Action Plans.

- 3. **Policy.** The objective of the Reclamation dam safety program is to ensure that Reclamation facilities do not present unreasonable risks to the public, public safety, property, and/or the environment. To achieve this objective, Reclamation monitors, examines, and evaluates the performance of dams in its inventory of facilities. Issues are evaluated in terms of loading conditions, structural response, and the potential consequences of dam failure. When Reclamation determines that risk reduction is necessary, reasonable risk reduction actions will be implemented. The management of dam safety issues is critical to Reclamation's ability to manage the risk environment these structures present. Decisions regarding the determination of need to reduce risk and assuring the safety of the public are an inherent Federal responsibility. While the decisions concerning such matters are reserved for Reclamation, decisions to reduce risks that will affect water and/or power contractors will be communicated with those contractors within 30 days after such a decision. Decisions on the response of Reclamation to dam safety issues require the input and collaboration of the regional director, area manager, and Chief, DSO, to ensure that the risk environment is being appropriately managed.

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4. Procedures.

A. Identifying and Communicating Issues Requiring Decisions.

- (1) Dam safety issues can be identified in a number of ways. An issue could be identified as the result of an established periodic process such as those described in the review and examination program for high or significant hazard potential dams, through the review and analysis of monitoring data, or through observations at the site. In most cases, communication of an issue will be written. Reclamation employees will communicate dam safety issues they have identified or that have been called to their attention through the official channels of the employee's particular organization to the Chief, DSO; regional director; or area manager for the specific dam. Employees may also communicate directly to the Chief, DSO; regional director; or area manager.
- (2) A documented decision on Reclamation's action will be made for every dam safety-related issue identified within 60 days of the completion of the document that identifies the basis for a dam safety concern (i.e., comprehensive review, issue evaluation, corrective action study). The decisions will be made and communicated as follows:
 - (a) Regional directors will make decisions on issues related to specific dams in collaboration with the area manager and Chief, DSO.
 - (b) Regional directors and the Chief, DSO, will keep the Commissioner adequately informed of dam safety issues and decisions.
 - (c) Regional directors and area managers will assure that necessary actions to reduce risk are communicated to water/power contractors and power marketing agencies and that they have an opportunity to participate in the development of the risk reduction alternatives.
 - (d) Regional directors and area managers will assure that all information protection requirements according to RM Directives and Standards (D&S), including SLE 02-01, Identifying and Safeguarding Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI), are communicated with contractors and met.
 - (e) The Director, Dam Safety and Infrastructure, will assure that the dam safety program appropriately addresses identified dam safety issues in a risk management context.
 - (f) The Dam Safety Officer will provide dam safety program oversight, guidance, and audit functions; advise on the implementation of Federal

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Guidelines for Dam Safety; and advise and represent the Commissioner and Assistant Secretary – Water and Science on dam safety issues.

- (3) When a decision has been made to take action to reduce risk, additional issues identified during implementation of that action will also be subject to this Policy.

B. Further Assignment of Responsibilities.

- (1) Further assignment of responsibilities of decision making by the regional directors to individuals or positions in their organization may occur. Also, the area manager and Chief, DSO, may further assign their responsibilities as collaborative decision makers to individuals or positions in their organizations. Documents assigning these responsibilities will be in writing and include a complete list of individuals or positions to whom responsibilities are assigned and all terms and limitations of the responsibilities. All assignments of responsibilities will be in writing. The person further assigning the responsibilities will prepare the complete record of assignment. A copy of each record of assignment must be provided to the Dam Safety Officer; the Chief, DSO; and the appropriate regional director and area managers.
- (2) All decisions related to this Policy will be made through collaboration among the regional director; Chief, DSO; and area manager for the specific dam either directly or through the positions to which responsibility has been assigned for their organization.
- (3) Issues presenting the most risk, such as requiring operational or structural modification, a change in hazard potential classification, or facility title transfer, must receive the highest management attention, and these decisions will be retained by the regional director, area manager, and Chief, DSO.

- C. Documentation of Decisions.** Written documentation of a decision is required for each issue. The decision that action (or no action) by Reclamation is justified will include documentation describing the decision, the actions (if any) necessary to address the issue, and the relative urgency for addressing the issue. Documentation of a dam safety-related decision may be initiated by any participant in the collaborative decision-making process. It is the responsibility of the initiator to provide a copy of the record to the other two parties. The documentation must state concurrence of the regional director, area manager, and Chief, DSO, either directly or through the position assigned this responsibility and must include the names of those who concurred. All decisions will include the signature of the initiator and must be provided to the regional director; Chief, DSO; and area manager of the specific dam.

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D. Notification of Water/Power Contractors.

- (1) Notification of Decision of Risk Reduction Action.
 - (a) Decisions requiring action to reduce risk will be communicated to water/power contractors and power marketing agencies in a timely fashion. Reclamation contractors who have elected to participate in the process of determining a risk reduction action are responsible for meeting all information protection requirements according to RM D&S, including SLE 02-01.
 - (b) Such communication shall be in writing and will identify the basis of the need to take action and will invite the contractors to participate in the process of determining the most reasonable action to take. Whenever possible, contractors will be briefed on such decisions prior to the completion and transmittal of the decision document. When it is not possible to brief contractors prior to a decision, the decision will be communicated to them within 30 days thereafter.
- (2) Plans for Periodic Communication and Reporting. Reclamation will work with water/power contractors and power marketing agencies to develop a plan for periodic communication and reporting of project status during the period of the dam safety modification. This plan will be documented in writing and transmitted to water/power contractors and power marketing agencies. The plan will include provisions for communicating documented decisions made during the process of implementing the risk reduction action(s).

5. Definitions.

- A. **Contractor.** Water and/or power user organization (a customer) that has an active repayment or water/power service contract with Reclamation, a Federal power marketing agency, or a non-Federal operating entity that pays or shares in the cost of the reimbursable portion of a proposed dam safety risk reduction action.
- B. **Dam Safety Issue.** An issue that, if not resolved:
 - (1) could lead to a failure or malfunction resulting in an uncontrolled release of stored water that would place the public and/or resources at risk, or
 - (2) would compromise Reclamation's ability to detect developing adverse dam performance and prudently respond to that performance.

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C. Hazard Potential.

- (1) High Hazard Potential Dam. A dam where failure or mis-operation will probably cause loss of human life.
- (2) Significant Hazard Potential Dam. A dam where failure or mis-operation results in no probable loss of human life but can cause economic loss, environmental damage, disruption of lifeline facilities, or impact other concerns. Significant hazard potential classification dams are often located in predominantly rural or agricultural areas but could be located in areas with population and significant infrastructure.

D. **Risk.** A measure of the possibility of loss or injury; exposure to the chance of injury or loss.

6. **Review Period.** This release will undergo review every four years.