



STATE OF OHIO
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Ohio's Dam Safety Program Protects All Ohioans

COLUMBUS, OH— Recent flooding and downstream damage underscores the importance of Ohio's dam safety program, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Division of Soil and Water Resources.

Ohioans living and working downstream from the largest dams in the state are at a reduced risk from catastrophic failure because of dam safety requirements.

Dam owners and downstream residents benefit from a strong dam safety program. There are about 1,550 dams under the jurisdictional authority of the state. In addition, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for inspecting another 20 dams, some of the largest in the state, under their jurisdiction. More than 3 million Ohioans receive their drinking water from surface water reservoirs impounded by dams.

Dams in Ohio are classified according to height, water storage volume and potential threat to people and property downstream.

Owners of Class I dams—those that generally pose the greatest risk to life and property—are assured of regular and thorough safety inspections by ODNR dam engineers. There are currently 361 of these large dams in Ohio.

Class II and Class III dams are smaller dams; failure of these dams would result primarily in flooding to property and roads. Nearly 1,200 of these fall under the jurisdiction of ODNR's dam safety program.

Class IV dams are less than 25 feet high and impound less than 50 acre-feet of water; damage caused by failure would be restricted to the dam itself and rural lands. In addition to these Class IV dams, there are many very small dams, generally those less than 6 feet high or impounding less than 15 acre-feet of water, which do not fall under state authority. There are thousands of these Class IV and smaller dams in Ohio, and many of these are farm ponds or recreational ponds that are privately owned.

Additionally, ODNR provides critical oversight of dam construction and repairs, as well as professional technical advice during emergency situations. Owners also receive information on maintenance and operational procedures, as well as assistance in developing important emergency action plans. Emergency action plans are required for all Class I, II and III dams in the state and are critical documents to have prepared for use if a problem develops with the dam.

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In recent years, program staff have placed an increased effort on working with dam owners to develop or strengthen emergency action plans as well as providing education on proper operation and maintenance of their dams. Assistance to dam owners in 12 counties will be the focus this year including: Brown, Carroll, Clermont, Columbiana, Lorain, Miami, Morgan, Shelby, Stark, Tuscarawas, Van Wert and Williams.

The state's dam safety program was established in 1963; a portion of program costs are provided by private, state and commercial dam owners through annual fees.

For more information about Ohio's dams or dam safety program, please visit ohiodnr.com or call (614) 265-6731.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Visit the ODNR Web site at ohiodnr.com.

For additional information, contact Rodney Tornes, ODNR Soil & Water Resources, 614-265-6737.

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