

Dam Safety Program

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Dam Safety Program is critical to addressing our nation's aging infrastructure, reducing the risks of flood and storm damage and making sure Corps owned and operated dams are operated safely and minimize risk to the public.

The Corps owns and operates 610 dams that serve a variety of purposes including navigation, flood damage reduction, water supply, irrigation, hydropower, recreation, environmental enhancement and combinations of these purposes. The Pittsburgh District owns and operates 16 flood damage reduction dams and 23 navigation locks and dams. As part of our responsibility in managing these dams, the Corps has a comprehensive Dam Safety Program that has public safety as its primary objective. Corps dams are routinely inspected and continually evaluated for safety in accordance with the Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety issued in 1979.

Risk management changes are being implemented in the Dam Safety Program to allow prioritization of work at the national level, thereby providing a standard strategy for the continued safety and security of our projects and the affected public. Dam safety risk has two components: probability of dam failure and consequences if failure were to occur.

Beginning in 2005, the Corps of Engineers performed Screening Portfolio Risk Analysis that considered performance and consequence of failure (risk-informed screening) to prioritize Corps-owned and operated dams nationwide. All Pittsburgh District facilities, 16 flood damage reduction dams and 23 navigation dams, were screened between 2005 and 2009.

The Corps of Engineers instituted a Dam Safety Action Classification System (DSAC) intended to provide consistent and systematic guidelines for appropriate actions to address the dam safety issues and deficiencies. Corps dams are placed into five DSAC classes based on their individual dam safety risk considered as probability of failure and potential failure consequences. DSAC I is the rating assigned for the highest risk dams, and DSAC V are dams which are considered safe and in compliance with current criteria. Consequences considered include lives lost, economic, environmental and other impacts.

The Corps of Engineers has identified six DSAC I flood damage reduction projects based on the risk analysis screenings to date. None of Pittsburgh District's flood damage reduction dams were identified as DSAC I, and one flood damage reduction dam, East Branch Dam, was identified as DSAC II.