



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Walla Walla District

News Release

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Corps identifies Interim Risk Reduction Measures for Dworshak Dam to help ensure public remains safe

WALLA WALLA, Wash. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ new risk-based dam safety program put Dworshak Dam near Orofino, Idaho, on the priority path to funding for repairs, according to Walla Walla District officials.

On 31 May 2007, the Corps released Engineering Circular (EC) 1110-2-6064, Interim Risk Reduction Measures (IRRM) for Dam Safety, which included a Dam Safety Action Classification (DSAC) table. The DSAC rating system includes five categories, with DSAC-5 being the “most safe,” and describes a policy for developing and implementing interim risk reduction measures to reduce the probability of unacceptable performance of Corps dams. USACE’s primary objective in its Dam Safety Program is to maintain public safety by making sure its dams do not present unacceptable risks to the public.

Corps Dam Safety Program inspectors performed an initial screening of about one-third of the Corps’ 610 dams. These screened dams were believed to be the highest risk among those USACE owns and operates. The new risk-informed screening process considers failure consequences, as well as performance issues, allowing USACE to prioritize its dams nationwide and produce life-risk and economic-risk information. DSAC ratings spotlight dams and navigation locks with compelling problems first, so a national priority can be assigned for funding, studies, investigations and remedial work.

The Corps’ screening system classified Dworshak Dam as DSAC-2.

“Dworshak Dam, like any dam, has maintenance challenges. To address these challenges, the District conducts routine and periodic inspections, monitoring, and evaluations to ensure the public is safe,” explained Donna Street, Walla Walla District’s chief of Engineering and Construction Division. “While inspections and studies show that seepage and leakage water is passing through the dam’s foundation and/or joint drains, the probability of failure at Dworshak Dam is relatively low.”

Dworshak Dam presents no immediate danger to people and property downstream of it, Street added. “We don’t think there is cause for any higher level of concern today than there was yesterday.”

“A large part of what contributed to Dworshak’s DSAC-2 rating is because of the *consequences* of failure – meaning the risk to people and property below it – not an imminent risk of failure,” Street pointed out.

Street explained, should such a failure occur, the consequences are very high in terms of public safety *and* economic impact. Although the probability is low, said Street, Dworshak’s huge reservoir capacity implies big consequences when inspectors evaluate, just for example, a ‘what-if’ scenario of large-scale seismic activity. Conversely, if there were no development below Dworshak Dam, the risk would be very low.

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The Corps is taking steps to minimize the probability and risk, and the President's proposed FY 09 budget contains \$1 million for risk reduction measures at the dam. Dworshak is monitored on an ongoing basis, and inspections are conducted every month by staff at the dam. Annually, engineers from the district office in Walla Walla inspect the dam. And every five years, there is a "formal" inspection with senior Corps engineers and engineers from other agencies. The last formal inspection was conducted in June 2007. The Corps' goal is to complete initial IRRM screenings of the remainder of its dams by October 2009.

To help keep the public informed, Walla Walla District staff held news briefings on Feb. 20 in Clarkston, Wash., and at Dworshak Dam in Ahsahka, Idaho, for state and local emergency managers, elected officials and news media representatives. Engineering and dam safety experts presented information and answered questions to more clearly explain the new Dam Safety program.

Walla Walla District will continue to keep the public informed of safety issues related to Dworshak and of the progress made in implementing the interim risk reduction measures.

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