

**U.S. Department of Labor**  
**Mine Safety and Health Administration**  
Protecting Miners' Safety and Health Since 1978

**SAFETY ALERT**  
**SPRING FORWARD for DAM SAFETY**

Spring months create dam safety concerns due to combinations of intense or long lasting rainfall, melting snow, strong wind and the shedding of dead vegetation.

Most dam failures occur from **overtopping** of the embankment by flood waters or from piping caused by **uncontrolled seepage** through the embankment or foundation.



**BEST PRACTICES**

- Conduct inspections following extreme weather events. This is especially important at dams categorized as “high hazard potential”.
- Remember that changes in land use, such as construction, logging and farming can cause runoff into the pool.
- Remove debris stuck in trashracks, culverts, spillways or ditches that can block drainage or reduce discharge capacity.
- Remove loose material from the perimeter of the pool area that can float if the pool level rises.
- Investigate changes in seepage quantity, abnormal or colored seepage, boils, whirlpools or saturated ground which may indicate uncontrolled seepage.
- Investigate embankment cracks, slumping or bulging that can indicate slope failure.
- Repair wave erosion on the upstream slope or erosion gullies on the downstream slope that can weaken the embankment.
- Repair riprap erosion protection in spillways and ditches that is displaced from waves or large flows.



**REMEMBER:**  
Safety depends upon what you  
DO or DON'T DO.