

Author

Dallon Thomas (Tom) Woosley, P.E., Georgia Safe Dams Program

**The Flood of 2009**

Georgia experienced one of its worst droughts from 2006 through 2008. In 2009 Mother Nature revealed her sense of humor with an abundance of rain. South Georgia was impacted with a round of heavy rains in the Spring. The drought was officially declared over in the summer of 2009. Mother Nature was not done. On September 21, 2009 parts of the metro Atlanta area received record flooding.

Several areas of Georgia were hit with heavy rains. The counties of Carroll, Douglas, Paulding and Cobb received the greatest amount of rainfall. Excessive rainfall fell in many of the metro Atlanta counties. According to the United States Geological Survey some areas recorded up to 20 inches of rain in a 24-hour period. Kent Franz with the National Weather Service stated, "this means that the chance of an event like this occurring is 1 in 10,000".

September 21 started off bad and got worse. It was a Monday morning and raining. This is never a good combination in Metro Atlanta. Mix in the fact that the rain had already started to cause some roads to be flooded and you have an interesting commute. The first of many calls set the tone for what was to follow. The call was from one of the engineers in our drinking water program informing me that the Dog River Reservoir Dam was overtopping by two feet. I found this information difficult to accept, given that the dam had just recently been raised an additional ten feet to handle the ½ PMP event. It was at this point I knew we were in for a bad day.

Over the next several days the Safe Dams Program handled over a hundred calls regarding issues with dams. There were over a hundred high hazard dams in the impacted areas. These dams were inspected with priority given to those with reports of damage. Over 30 of the dams suffered some extent of damage. Many of these dams saw rainfall in excess of their design storm. Fortunately, there was no regulated structure that failed, demonstrating the effectiveness of having safe dams regulations.

This paper will summarize the emergency response actions of the Safe Dams Program staff and our inspection results from this historic event. A discussion of the impacts to the high hazard dams will also be presented.