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Dam Safety Officials Commemorate 100th Anniversary of Utah Dam Failure
Failure highlights importance of emergency planning and early warnings

Lexington, Ky. – On May 25, 1914, the caretaker of the Hatchtown Dam in Garfield County, Utah, discovered a leak in the dam, which grew in size throughout the day until the dam failed later that evening, releasing nearly 12,000 acre-feet of water downstream. Fortunately, no one was killed as a result of the failure, mostly due to the quick discovery of the leak and early warnings, but bridges, irrigation systems and farmland along the Sevier River were destroyed.

The Hatchtown Dam was built to create a reservoir for the irrigation of 7,000 acres of land. Today, 10 percent of cropland in the United States is irrigated using water stored behind dams. Along with irrigation, dams provide important benefits, including drinking water, recreation, flood control and hydroelectric power.

“There are dams in every state and all Americans benefit from dams. But it’s important to understand the risks associated with potential incidents and failures,” said Lori Spragens, executive director of the [Association of State Dam Safety Officials](http://www.asdso.org) (ASDSO). “The 100th anniversary of the Hatchtown Dam failure is an important reminder of the need to maintain dams properly and to have emergency procedures in place before a crisis occurs.”

Everyone has a role to play in creating a future where all dams are safe. Dam owners are primarily responsible for the safety of their dams. Private dam owners are responsible for more than 65 percent of U.S. dams, but many lack the financial resources necessary for adequate dam maintenance. Fortunately, Utah has a funding program to assist dam owners with repair, abandonment or removal of dams. This program includes low-interest loans for the maintenance of water infrastructure and grants to help dam owners rehabilitate existing high-hazard potential dams to meet current safety standards. [According to ASDSO’s data](#), there are 671 state-regulated dams in Utah, of which 198 are classified as high-hazard potential dams. The high-hazard potential classification indicates that a dam may cause loss of life if it were to fail.

ASDSO encourages members of the public to educate themselves on both the benefits of dams and the risks of dam incidents and failures. Members of the public can determine if they live in a dam failure flood inundation zone by contacting their local emergency management agency or the state dam safety program.

More information on staying safe near dams can be found in ASDSO's informational guide, [Living with Dams: Know Your Risks](#), which the organization developed in conjunction with the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#).

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The Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) is a national, non-profit organization founded in 1984 and dedicated to improving dam safety through research, education and communication. Web: www.damsafety.org