

**If a dam appears to be in the process of failing, call 911 immediately and report the situation to your local law enforcement agency.**

## Dam Safety Complaints

If you believe that your property or person may be endangered by the construction, maintenance, or operation of a dam, you may initiate DNRC involvement by submitting a written and signed complaint. Upon receipt of such a complaint, the DNRC will determine based on information submitted with the complaint and information or records that may already be on file whether to order the dam owner to have a licensed engineer perform an inspection of the dam. If an inspection finds a defect that may present an immediate hazard to life or property, the DNRC may order steps to eliminate the defect and hazard. Such steps may include draining the dam, limiting use of defective appurtenances, and other appropriate measures. [See Mont. Code Ann. § 85-15-215].

### IMPORTANT:

The State of Montana's Dam Safety Program has only limited enforcement authority and resources. The DNRC has adopted dam safety standards but it is up to the dam owner to make sure a dam is properly engineered according to those standards. The DNRC may order an owner to obtain an inspection by a licensed engineer but does not generally perform its own independent inspections. We therefore recommend contacting the dam owner to discuss your concerns before filing a complaint.

*Remember, by filing a complaint, you are requesting enforcement action from the State of Montana*

\*Please contact the DNRC Dam Safety Program for a list of licensed engineers who specialize in dams

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Kalispell Unit Office  
655 Timberwolf Parkway  
Suite 4  
Kalispell, MT 59901-1215  
(406) 752-2713

John Connors, PE  
Helena Regional Office  
1424 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620-1601  
(406) 444-9724

Marvin Cross, CFM  
Havre Regional Office  
210 Sixth Avenue  
Havre, MT 59620-1828  
(406) 265-5516

Sam Johnson, EIT  
Billings Regional Office  
1371 Rimtop Drive  
Billings, MT 59105-1978  
(406) 247-4423

Larry Schock, CFM  
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Sterling Sundheim, CFM  
Lewistown Regional Office  
613 NE Main, Suite E  
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(406) 538-7459

Troy Benn, EIT  
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Suite 110  
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(406) 556-4501

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1424 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620-1601  
(406) 444-6613

## **DNRC Steps in responding to a complaint – Non-Emergency**

- DNRC will submit the complaint to the owner for review and response
- Upon review of the complaint and owner's response and other pertinent data, DNRC may conduct an investigation.
- If a problem is found to exist, depending on the seriousness of the problem, DNRC will often require the dam owner to hire a licensed engineer to inspect the dam and make recommendations for repair, breach or removal.
- DNRC may also order the necessary remedial action to eliminate the defect in the dam under appropriate circumstances.

## **DNRC Steps in responding to a complaint – Emergency**

- If an emergency condition exists and there is potential for substantial property damage and/or loss of life, the DNRC may, under appropriate circumstances, order the dam removed and/or breached and put a lien on the property to pay for expenses associated with emergency action.

## **Frequently asked questions:**

### ***What if the dam is in the process of failing?***

Call 911 immediately and report the situation to your local law enforcement personnel.

### ***What if the dam appears close to failure status?***

Please call one of the [DNRC Regional Offices](#) and let them know. Tell the person answering the phone this is a dam emergency and you need to speak with an engineer. Do not leave a voice mail message. If you cannot reach a DNRC office please contact Disaster and Emergency Services for further guidance. [http://dma.mt.gov/des/DES\\_Staff.asp](http://dma.mt.gov/des/DES_Staff.asp)

*The requirement of filing an affidavit may be waived dependant on severity of the situation*

### ***Can I file an anonymous complaint?***

No.

### ***Can I file a complaint if I do not live below the dam?***

No, you must be impacted by failure of the dam

### ***What if I am uncertain about whether or not a problem exists?***

Call and discuss your concerns with the dam owner, you can also call one of the DNRC dam safety engineers for advice

[http://dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water\\_op/dam\\_safety/opregionalofficesmap\\_6-11.pdf](http://dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water_op/dam_safety/opregionalofficesmap_6-11.pdf)

### ***Where can I learn more about dams?***

[http://dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water\\_op/dam\\_safety/default.asp](http://dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water_op/dam_safety/default.asp)

