

**Subject: Maryland Dam Safety Message for National Dam Safety Awareness Day**

Dear All Maryland Dam Owners,

In recognition of [National Dam Safety Awareness Day](#) on May 31<sup>st</sup>, the Maryland Department of the Environment Dam Safety Division (the Department) is sending this email to remind you that you can take proactive steps to manage the risk that is inherent with dam ownership.



**Emergency Action Plan Updates**

The Department recommends that all high and significant hazard dams in Maryland have effective and updated Emergency Action Plans (EAP).

While no one anticipates that their dam will fail, dam failures occur every year in this country. In the event of an unusual event that may stress your dam (hurricane, heavy rain, earthquake, etc.), an effective and up-to-date EAP is critical in providing for notification of the downstream populations and for reducing loss of life and damage that result from a dam failure. Should your dam fail and cause loss of life or property damage, implementing an EAP will demonstrate responsible and recommended actions consistent with standard level of care by a dam owner.

In particular, the Department recommends that emergency contact information is confirmed to be current. As recent staffing changes have occurred in the Dam Safety Division, please ensure that your point of contact is up to date. If you are unsure of your point of contact, or have questions regarding your EAP, please contact Hal Van Aller ([hal.vanaller@maryland.gov](mailto:hal.vanaller@maryland.gov))

Please plan to update your EAP by July 1 and provide an electronic copy to the Dam Safety Division. If an EAP is reviewed and found to need no revisions, please contact the Department so that I can update our records accordingly. Please note that annual EAP updates are a condition of dam construction and repair permits for High and Significant hazard structures.

**Spring/Summer Maintenance**

As the weather warms up (and hopefully dries out), now is a good time to perform regular maintenance and repairs at your dam. In particular, the Department recommends that:

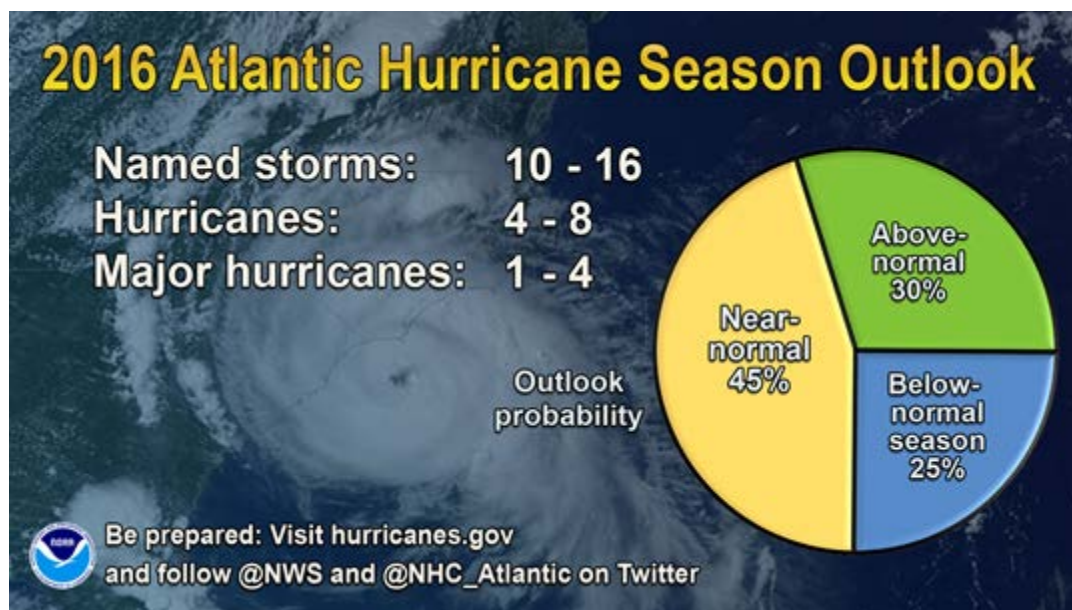
- Grass is mowed and woody vegetation is removed before significant new growth appears;
- Embankments are checked for unusual conditions such as seepage, erosion or animal burrows;
- Concrete structures are checked for cracks or leaks;
- Trash racks are kept clear of debris that may have accumulated during high spring flows;
- Areas where significant ice buildup occurred over the winter are checked for damage; and

- Valves are exercised and lubricated as needed to ensure proper working order.

Rigorous maintenance programs are often necessary to ensure that conditions at a dam do not deteriorate over time. If you find a condition that needs attention, the Dam Safety Division is available to provide advice on next-steps.

### **Hurricane Season is Here**

The Atlantic hurricane season begins on June 1, and the NOAA Climate Prediction Center has indicated that the [2016 will most likely be "near-normal"](#). Don't be fooled into complacency though - the past few years have had below average hurricane activity - so expect to see more storms this summer than in recent history.



### **Safety AT Dams**

This year, National Dam Safety Awareness Day will focus on encouraging swimmers and boaters to remain safe around dams. Last year, at least 25 people drowned at dam sites across the U.S., and the trend is continuing this year, with at least 13 deaths reported nationally. Countless other incidents have occurred, resulting in serious injuries.

“Low head” dams—dams one to fifteen feet in height, usually spanning an entire river or stream, and dams with large overflow spillways —are notoriously dangerous to individuals who kayak, swim, boat, or fish near them. Aptly dubbed “drowning machines,” these structures produce powerful recirculating currents that trap individuals and boats. Neither swimming ability nor personal flotation devices (PFDs) are adequate protection.

The Department strongly encourages dam owners to consider adding appropriate warning signs, buoys or other safety devices at their dams to discourage unsafe behavior.



**National Dam Safety Awareness Day  
reminds us to not play around dams.**

**#dontdrownatdams #damdangerous  
[www.DamSafety.org](http://www.DamSafety.org)**

We appreciate your cooperation and commitment to the safety of your dam and emergency preparedness. Please reply directly to me if you do not wish to receive this message again in the future.

Sincerely,

Hal Van Aller, P.E., Chief  
MDE Dam Safety Division  
1800 Washington Blvd  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Cell phone: [443.271.8123](tel:443.271.8123)  
Baltimore office phone: [410.537.3538](tel:410.537.3538)  
<http://www.mde.maryland.gov/damsafety>