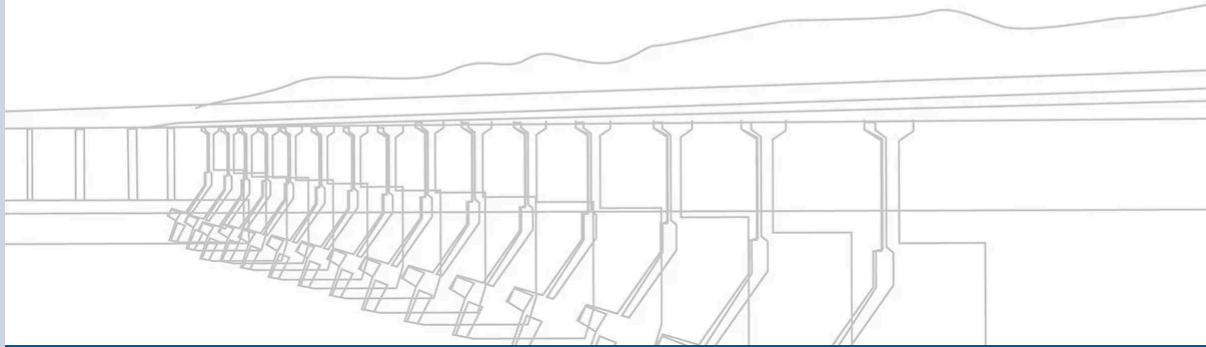




Dams Safety

Dams Safety Focus



21 February 2025



Message from the Acting CEO

Welcome to the latest issue of *Dams Safety Focus*, our eNewsletter providing up-to-date information to help declared dam owners, and their consultants and contractors, manage their dams' safety.

All dam owners should now be aware that the NSW Government intends to introduce a declared dams safety levy on 1 July 2025. Declared dam owners will receive a letter from DSNSW in April 2025 confirming the consequence category of each dam and detailing the 2025-26 levy amount. For more information read the article below in this edition.

Dams Safety NSW is pleased to announce we have published our new guidance note on '[The requirement to reduce dam safety risks so far as is reasonably practicable - 'SFAIRP'](#)'. Thank you to everyone who provided feedback on the draft. The guidance note will help dam owners to understand this fundamental requirement when assessing the safety of dams.

Lastly, Annual Dams Safety Standards Reports are due by 31 March. Please refer to our [website](#) to access the online submission form, and for further information about how to submit your report.

Alison Collaros
Acting CEO, Dams Safety NSW



Introduction of the Dams Safety Levy

In January all declared dam owners in NSW received an email from Dams Safety NSW regarding the NSW Government's intent to introduce a declared dams safety levy in accordance with the *Dams Safety Act 2015*. The levy will recover some of the costs of regulating declared dams in NSW.

In December 2023 the Government commissioned the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to recommend a clear, cost-effective methodology for the Dams Safety Levy.

IPART carried out extensive consultation and hosted a public hearing with declared dam owners from March to August 2024. This process was essential in gathering a broad range of perspectives to ensure that the levy structure was informed by stakeholder feedback. Details about the IPART dams safety levy review can be found on [their website](#).

The proposed levy will apply to each declared dam and the price will be calculated using the methodology proposed by IPART. The prices will vary depending on a dam's consequence category and will include an annual inflation adjustment (indexation).

Next steps

In April 2025, all declared dam owners will receive a letter from Dams Safety NSW confirming the consequence category of each dam and detailing the 2025-2026 levy amount.

Questions?

If you have any questions in the interim, contact the Water Enquiries team at water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au or **call 1300 081 047**.

Further information about the levy is available on the [Dams Safety NSW website](#).

Review of the Dams Safety Act 2015

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has commenced a statutory review of the *Dams Safety Act 2015*.

The primary aim of this review is to determine whether the policy objectives of the Act remain valid and whether the terms of the Act are still appropriate for securing those objectives. This will help to ensure the Act continues to support the safety of declared dams.

A consultation process will commence in June 2025 with opportunities for declared dam owners to learn more about, and provide input to the review.

You can find more information about the review on the [department's website](#).

NEW guidance note: Reducing dam safety risks so far as is reasonably practicable (SFAIRP)

Following consultation with dam owners and dam safety consultants, Dams Safety NSW has recently published a [guidance note](#) that explains what a dam owner must do to demonstrate that their dam's safety risks have been appropriately assessed and reduced so far as is reasonably practicable (SFAIRP).

To reduce risks 'SFAIRP' means, for all identified risks, a dam owner needs to determine the available practicable measures to address the risk ('what can be done') and then test which measures to reduce the risk are 'reasonable'. The new guidance note includes the relevant matters to consider when determining what is 'reasonably practicable' and how reducing dam safety risks SFAIRP relates to the 'safety threshold' in the Dams Safety Regulation 2019.

A dam owner must take every possible risk reduction measure unless the cost, time, or effort involved is grossly disproportionate to the potential harm prevented.

Declared dam owners will already be aware that they need to use the risk management framework in the Dams Safety Regulation 2019 to produce a risk report on all foreseeable risks to their dam at least every five years. This report will list the measures the dam owner will implement to reduce the dam's risks SFAIRP, as required by the Dams Safety Regulation.



Have you submitted your Annual Safety Standards Report?

Under dams safety legislation, declared dam owners must lodge a separate Annual Dam Safety Standards Report for each of their declared dams with Dams Safety

NSW by **31 March** every year. The report covers the period 1 January to 31 December of the previous calendar year.

How to submit your report to Dams Safety NSW

1. The report must be completed using the [online form](#) available at [Annual Dams Safety Standards Report | Dams Safety_\(nsw.gov.au\)](#).
2. Once completed and submitted, you will receive an email with an unsigned pdf copy of your Annual Dams Safety Standards Report.
3. The pdf report must then be signed by the dam owner office holder(s). A digital signature can be used. Email the signed report to info@damsafety.nsw.gov.au.

Dam owners must also keep a copy of the report/s at their office and publish the report/s on their website (if available) for members of the public to view.

Annual Dams Safety Standards report audits

From July 2025 Dams Safety NSW will be conducting desktop audits of Annual Dams Safety Standards Reports submitted for 2024.

If your dam is selected for an audit you will receive a letter from Dams Safety NSW, and be given 2 weeks to provide the documentation as described in your annual report.

Important points about the audit

- It is a desktop audit only. There will be no face-to-face meeting.
- DSNSW will notify dam owners of the results in writing within a month of completion of the audit with non-compliances to be addressed by the dam owner.

Note: Failure to lodge an Annual Safety Standards Report may result in a penalty notice.

Dam emergency plan tips

Dams Safety NSW audits declared dam emergency plans as part of its risk-based compliance program. While some dams have well-established emergency plans, there are still areas where owners can refine their documentation and processes to avoid common non-compliances and enhance safety. They include:

- Provide details of materials in the dam. Does it contain water or other substances? Specify the type of waste, pH, minerals, and other substances that are present in any tailings or wastewater.
- Describe the circumstances that are most likely to cause a dam failure. There should be a detailed response to the most likely failure modes, with less detail for those that are less likely.
- Include an inundation map to make it clear which areas, people, properties, infrastructure, and environments could be affected by a dam failure.
- Clearly define the triggers for white, amber, and red alerts, and link each to specific responses.
- Include an overview of emergency exercise scheduling and events.
- Include the [NSW SES summary sheet](#) at the beginning of the plan so the first responders have consistent information to use in an emergency.
- Review contact details every year and update the [NSW SES summary sheet](#).
- Consider starting the plan with a table showing the document version and a schedule of reviews, including a summary of what (if anything) has changed at each date.

Emergency plans must be shared with Dams Safety NSW and the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) after each update.

Helpful resources

[Dams Safety Regulation 2019 - NSW Legislation](#)

[Guideline - Emergency plans | Dams Safety](#)

[UPDATE your dam emergency plan with the new summary information sheet | Dams Safety](#)

[Online forum about changes to dam emergency plans](#) – March 2024

[Emergency plans for declared dams webinar](#) – May 2021

[Conducting a dam emergency exercise](#) – June 2023

[Dam Safety Insights: Emergency exercises](#) podcast



Jindabyne Dam (owned by Snowy Hydro) spillway gates automatically release water whenever the storage reaches or exceeds 100%.

New policy on Dams Safety NSW's role in regulating declared dams with controlled spillways

Dams Safety NSW has released a [new policy](#) describing our role in the regulation of declared dams with controlled spillways.

The reliable operation of controlled spillways is critical to the safety of many dams where they are required to release flood waters such that the integrity of the dam is not threatened. The failure of controlled spillways to operate as designed/planned has the potential to cause unexpected situations to occur and serious consequences both upstream and downstream of a dam.

Controlled spillways are designed to operate:

1. to protect a dam from failure (using gated spillways and/or fuse plug spillways).
2. to regulate the flow of water in a river catchment, or for flood mitigation in flood conditions (using gated spillways).

The operation of spillway gates, in particular fuse gates and fuse plugs, can lead to a sudden rise in downstream river levels. This may, in some circumstances, appear to the community to be a 'dam failure'.



ENROL NOW: online embankment and concrete dam surveillance courses

Dams Safety NSW has collaborated with TAFE NSW to deliver 2 three-hour online courses. They are both available on TAFE NSW's online learning platform.

[Surveillance of EMBANKMENT dams - routine inspections](#) The course will help NSW dam owners understand the activities involved in conducting routine visual inspections of embankment dams.

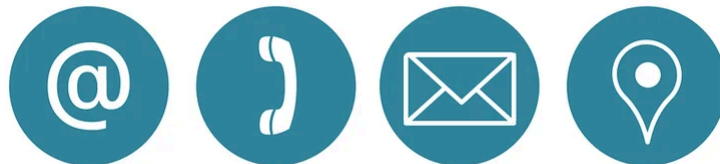
[Surveillance of CONCRETE dams - routine inspections](#) This course will help NSW dam owners understand the activities involved in conducting routine visual inspections of concrete dams.

It is recommended that participants have at least 6 months' experience inspecting dams before attempting the courses.

PLEASE NOTE: successfully completing these courses does not mean you are a 'competent person'. You can choose to be assessed for competency against the National Water Training Package unit of competency **'NWPCAD011 - inspect and**

report on embankment dam safety' or NWPCAD010 – Inspect and report on concrete dam safety, for an additional fee.

Contact Dams Safety NSW for more information about eligibility requirements for competency assessments by emailing us at info@damsafety.nsw.gov.au.



Do you have a new contact person for your dam?

Notify DSNSW - it's the law

If you have a new contact person for your declared dam, or their details have changed, you are legally required to notify Dams Safety NSW within 14 days.

Maintaining up-to-date details for a contact person for DSNSW ensures that the Dams Safety Act and regulation can be administered efficiently and safely.

Dam owners need to notify Dams Safety NSW of changes to contact details within 14 days by completing this [online form](#), emailing us at info@damsafety.nsw.gov.au, or calling **(02) 9842 8073**.



Serious incidents or injuries that occur at, or in relation to, a declared dam must be reported to Dams Safety NSW as soon as possible after the incident by calling **0403 681 645 (24 hours/7 days a week)**.

A written report of an incident in a form approved by Dams Safety NSW must be given to Dams Safety NSW no later than 72 hours after the incident, even if an oral report of the incident has already been given. **[Click here to complete the online incident report form.](#)**

Examples of the types of incidents you should report to DSNSW include:

- Risk of or actual failure of the dam
- Death or serious injury of persons related to the dam and its operations
- A security incident that has or may affect the safety of the dam
- An incident related to dam safety that is reasonably likely to cause concern to members of the public

If you are not sure if an incident meets the reporting requirements in clause 19 of the Dams Safety Regulation, it is recommended that declared dam owners report the incident.

Even if you have already made an oral report, email any additional information to **incident@damsafety.nsw.gov.au**

Reporting incidents to DSNSW is required by law. The information helps us monitor action taken by dam owners to resolve issues at dams. It also helps us track issues related to dam safety to inform our policies and programs.

Contact us

Dams Safety Focus is our newsletter on dam safety in NSW. If you have any questions or feedback contact us at:

Dams Safety NSW

Phone: (02) 9842 8073

Email: **info@damsafety.nsw.gov.au**

[Visit our website - Dams Safety NSW](#)

Dams Safety NSW, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta, NSW 2124

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