



USACE Levee Safety Program

“Public safety is our number one priority, especially for those millions of Americans who live and work behind levees.”
– MG Merdith “Bo” Temple, USACE Deputy Commanding General

In 2006, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) created its Levee Safety Program to assess the integrity and viability of levees and to make sure that levee systems do not present unacceptable risks to the public, property and environment. The basic objectives of the USACE Levee Safety Program are to:

- develop balanced and informed assessments of levees within the program;
- evaluate, prioritize and justify levee safety decisions, and
- make recommendations to improve public safety associated with levee systems.

To date, USACE has created the National Levee Database; inventoried all levees in the program; and improved inspection procedures. USACE is currently developing a method to manage its portfolio of levee systems and is reviewing and revising current levee-related policies and procedures.

The USACE Levee Safety Program comprises more than 14,000 miles of levees and includes systems operated and maintained by USACE; federally authorized systems, locally operated and maintained, and covered under Inspection of Completed Works; and locally constructed, operated and maintained systems in the USACE Rehabilitation and Inspection Program (RIP) in accordance with [Public Law \(PL\) 84-99](#).

Currently Underway

- **Periodic Inspections** – The [American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009](#) (ARRA) provided \$90 million for USACE to conduct [Periodic Inspections](#) of federally authorized levee systems in its Levee Safety Program. (Please see the [Dec. 1, 2009, StrongPoint Levee Safety Program Periodic Inspections.](#))
- **Levee Screening Tool** – USACE is currently applying a screening tool to all levees in the program. This tool combines inspection data with a preliminary engineering assessment and maximizes the use of existing information (inspection ratings and consequence data) and local knowledge of levee performance. Screening results will be used to rank levees based on relative risk to help inform decisions about future actions to improve public safety associated with the levees.
- **Vegetation Variance Request Policy Guidance** – USACE is revising the process to request variances from vegetation management standards. The revisions incorporate agency-wide approaches, to include: conducting broader flood risk management planning; applying procedures consistently on a national basis; managing levees on a systems basis; incorporating levee safety officers as part of the review process; using agency technical review to ensure quality, consistency and credibility; consistently documenting technical decisions; and sharing best practices and lessons learned nationally. The final revised policy is expected to be issued during the second quarter of fiscal 2010.
- **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Levee System Evaluation** – USACE is finalizing the guidance, which will include the process USACE will follow for conducting a “NFIP Levee System Evaluation” or also known as “levee certification.” A rollout strategy for the release of this guidance will be developed and will include both USACE and FEMA.

Key Messages

- Public safety is the number one priority.
- Levee safety must be applied on a system-wide basis.
- Levees do not eliminate flood risk.
- Levee safety is a part of flood risk management.
- Both levee safety and flood risk management are a shared responsibility.
- The 1 percent chance event (or 100 year flood) is not a safety standard.

Facts & Figures

- The Corps has specific authorities for approximately 2,000 levee systems, or 14,000 miles of levees.
- There is still a large universe of non-Corps levees that has not been inventoried or inspected. The size, location, condition or consequence of failure of these levees is unknown.
- A homeowner behind a levee providing 1 percent annual chance risk reduction has a 26 percent chance of flooding during a 30-year mortgage.
- For more information about USACE’s efforts, visit <http://www.usace.army.mil/>.