

# Dept. of Natural Resources: Dam Safety Awareness Day: Recreate safely around Wisconsin's dams

Posted on Monday, May 2, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

**MADISON, Wis.** – Ahead of the spring and summer recreation season, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds Wisconsinites and visitors to recreate safely around the state's nearly 4,000 dams.

Gov. Evers proclaimed May 7, 2022, as Dam Safety Awareness Day throughout Wisconsin, joining the DNR's dam safety program and in partnership with the Midwest Hydro Users Group, to recognize critical infrastructure and remind outdoor enthusiasts that often-avoidable deaths and serious injuries occur near dams every year.

According to the Association of State Dam Safety Officials, during the past 40 years, there have been many more fatalities from accidents at dams than there have been deaths resulting from dam failures. Specifically, more than 400 reported fatalities nationwide at dams versus 40 deaths from dam failures.

From Memorial Day through Labor Day each year, millions of Wisconsin residents and visitors enjoy the lakes, streams and flowages near Wisconsin's dams. Outdoor enthusiasts can stay safe near dams by following these safety tips:

- Obey all warning signs, barriers and flashing lights, horns and sirens
- Wear a life jacket
- Always stay outside buoy lines and away from restricted areas near dams
- Never swim or wade near a dam
- Never boat or fish alone when near a dam
- Leave your boat motor running to provide maneuvering power

- Stay clear of spillways - changing currents and “boiling” waves can make boat control difficult near dams
- Be aware that reverse currents occur below dams and can pull a boat back toward the dam into the spillway and capsize it
- Never anchor boats below a dam as water levels can change rapidly
- Set an example for children who may not be aware of the dangers

If dams fail, flooding can be destructive. The Wisconsin DNR Dam Safety Team provides technical assistance to dam owners in Wisconsin, including inspections, risk identification, emergency response and review of dam repair plans. The DNR also owns about 300 dams, most of which were created to generate recreational opportunities like fishing, hunting and boating.

If left unmaintained, dams pose an increased risk to life and property, making problems such as sudden breaks more likely during flood conditions. The Association of State Dam Safety Officials estimates that the cost to rehabilitate the nation’s non-federal high-hazard dams, or those whose failure could cause loss of life, exceeds \$20 billion. Rehabilitation is an integral part of maintaining or improving dams’ safety, and the DNR provides dam repair and removal grants to assist owners with making their dams safer.

For more information regarding your local risk, your role in dam safety and the benefits and impacts of dams, visit [the DNR dam safety webpage](#).