South Fork Tolt River Reservoir and Dam

Warning System Information

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) maintains an advance dam failure warning system to warn residents downstream in case of an unlikely dam failure event. The warning system, which is in its fifth generation now, includes sophisticated monitoring instruments at the site, four cameras at strategic locations, and seven sirens along Tolt River Road and within the City of Carnation. The warning system is automated and monitored by operators in the SPU Operations Control Center 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

Siren testing for the warning system is conducted at noon every Wednesday. The tests involve activating the sirens and playing pre-recorded audio messages.

What You Can Expect

The sirens have pre-recorded messages that will play during a local emergency. These are the types of messages you may hear:

Test message:
“This is a test of the Tolt Dam Warning System. This is only a test.”

Dam Failure Message:
“The Tolt Dam has failed, evacuate the area immediately.”

All Clear Message:
“It is safe to return, the dam is secure.”

Community Emergency Message:
“A community emergency has developed, please stay in your home until further advised.”

These messages were incorporated into the system by request of emergency officials in the area. The local fire and police departments, school officials and city government, in conjunction with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), have established contingency plans for such a disaster. These plans specifically address public notification, evacuation and post-incident recovery efforts.

Be Prepared…

Being prepared for an emergency is the best way to ensure your family’s protection.

1. Be sure that all family members are familiar with your community warning system.
2. Sit down with family members and go over emergency evacuation routes. Prepare both an evacuation route via vehicle and on foot.
3. Practice the safest routes from your home or business to high, safe ground.
4. Set up a family meeting place, in the event that members are separated.
5. Have an out-of-area contact person for family members to call.

Have the following emergency supplies ready in a quick, easy to get location:

- Food and drinking water
- First aid kit
- Medicines
- Blankets, warm clothing
- Rain gear
- Portable radios with batteries
- Flashlights with extra batteries

As in any major disaster, you should plan on being self-sufficient for at least 72 hours.
South Fork Tolt River Reservoir and Dams

Seattle Public Utilities owns and operates the Tolt Reservoir on the South Fork Tolt River and a water regulating basin in the Seattle Municipal Watershed. The reservoir stores 57,900 acre-ft of water to supply 30% of the drinking water for 1.3 million people in the metropolitan Seattle area. For more information and a virtual tour of the watershed, please visit Seattle Public Utilities website:
Click on “Cedar and Tolt Watersheds”

The Tolt Dam is a 200-foot high modern earth-fill dam located 16 miles upstream from the City of Carnation. The dam is regulated by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Dam safety inspection is conducted annually by SPU and FERC dam safety engineers, augmented by comprehensive evaluations by independent specialty consultants every five years. These thorough efforts are to ensure that the dam complies with federal dam safety regulations and engineering requirements. The dam is deemed safe under the current operation condition and engineering standards.

Partners in Safety
Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) works with the following agencies and local governments in public communication and preparation of the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for the South Fork Tolt River Reservoir and Dam:

For Emergency Preparedness, contact local Emergency Management Agencies

For Evacuation Route information, please contact City of Carnation
Phone: 425-333-4192
Website: www.ci.carnation.wa.us

For information about the Tolt Dam Warning System, please contact Daniel Huang at Seattle Public Utilities
Phone: 206-233-2535
Email: Daniel.Huang@seattle.gov