



USACE Levee Safety Program Guidance

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Background

Since 2007, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Levee Safety Program has partnered with levee sponsors to better understand, prioritize, and manage flood risks associated with levees. The intent of the Levee Safety Program is to understand, monitor, and manage flood risk associated with levees over time; provide a framework to sustain long-term benefits; and adapt activities and actions based on the dynamic nature of flood risk. USACE has now developed draft agency guidance, Engineer Circular 1165-2-218: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Levee Safety Program, to consolidate and formalize the principles, policies, and key processes used by USACE in the program. The anticipated publication date is September 2020.

Overview of Engineer Circular 1165-2-218

The intent of Engineer Circular 1165-2-218 is to provide context and guidance related to program activities. The Engineer Circular will be temporary in nature and will expire two years after the date of publication, providing USACE time to learn through implementation experience, identify clarifications or additional resources required, and to work with our partners in implementing the program. After two years, the Engineer Circular will either be revised, rescinded, or converted to an Engineer Regulation, which does not expire.

Although Engineer Circulars are typically used to establish internal agency policy, this document has been drafted to include four volumes applicable to both USACE and levee sponsors. Most levees in the USACE Levee Safety Program are operated and maintained by non-federal levee sponsors making them key partners in implementing the program. This guidance lays a path forward for USACE and levee sponsors to partner in managing levee-related flood risks.

The Engineer Circular is divided into the following four volumes:

- Volume I: Levee Safety Overview, provides an overview of levee safety, defines key terms, and defines the levees included in the USACE Levee Safety Program portfolio.
- Volume II: Levee Sponsor Activities, describes the roles and activities of levee sponsors that are part of the USACE Levee Safety Program and how USACE integrates with those activities.
- Volume III: USACE Levee Safety Program Policies and Procedures, outlines the principles of the program and defines policies and procedures for USACE implementation of the USACE Levee Safety Program. This volume complements existing guidance; puts program activities such as inspections, risk assessments, and risk communication into context; and echoes the importance of partnering with levee sponsors across the full suite of program activities.
- Volume IV: Summary of Shared Information and Uses, summarizes how Levee Safety Program information can be used by levee sponsors, USACE, and others to make decisions.

Policy Highlights

The mission of the USACE Levee Safety Program is to ensure levee systems perform as designed and provide intended benefits to the nation by working with levee sponsors and stakeholders to assess, communicate, and manage flood risks to people, property, navigation, and the environment.

This Engineer Circular includes the following key policies:

- Lays a path forward for USACE and levee sponsors to partner in managing the changing risk associated with levee systems over time by adopting actions based on the associated risk.
- Establishes a process for tracking, monitoring, and adapting levee activities based on risk.
- Requires USACE to develop and maintain a ten-year outlook of anticipated program activities in conjunction with levee sponsors and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- Describes levee sponsor activities related to four main areas of flood risk management, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation, and how USACE activities can help support levee sponsors in each of these areas.
- Sets a minimum requirement to notify levee sponsors in advance of USACE levee inspections and risk assessments.
- Changes the planned frequency of USACE levee inspections to occur, at a minimum, every five years.
- Establishes the planned frequency for updating USACE risk assessments to occur, at a minimum, every ten years.
- Describes how USACE can support risk communication.

Next Steps and More Information

Prior to publication, the Engineer Circular will be available for a public comment period through the Federal Register under docket number COE-2020-0003 found at <http://www.regulations.gov>. During the public comment period, USACE will host several virtual and in-person information sessions to provide additional details on the purpose and content of the draft guidance.

Due to ongoing concerns related to coronavirus diseases 2019 (COVID-19), USACE has extended the public comment period through July 27, 2020. In addition, USACE has postponed planned in-person information sessions and plans to reschedule once it is safe to do so.

The latest information about the Engineer Circular, the public comment period, and virtual and in-person information sessions can be found on the USACE Levee Safety Program Website: <https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Levee-Safety-Program/>. All questions about this guidance should be sent to the Engineer Circular 1165-2-218 mailbox: EC218@usace.army.mil.