

Poster Abstract: Lessons from a Potential Dam Failure Functional Exercise

Representatives from the Buffalo National Weather Service Office and Northeast River Forecast Center joined a total of 18 Federal Agencies to participate in a functional exercise designed for the Mount Morris Dam in New York State. The two day exercise simulated an event which brought over 10 inches of rain to the Genesee River basin from the remnants of a tropical system. The exercise included a potential failure of the Mount Morris dam. The Mount Morris dam is located on the Genesee River, with several small towns near the dam, and with the Rochester metropolitan area about 50 miles downstream. While the dam did not fail in this exercise, it did highlight customer perceptions of Flash Flood Watches and Flash Flood Warnings, which are the two primary products used by the National Weather Service to convey dam break information. Responses varied during the simulation, with some taking less immediate action from the Flash Flood Watch than if a Warning were issued. Given the nature of a dam break, it is unlikely that a Flash Flood Warning could be issued and disseminated prior to dam failure. This exercise highlights whether a Flash Flood Watch would produce adequate response from customers prior to dam failure.