

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ASDSO Recalls Deadly 2006 Flood

Ongoing Commitment Needed to Ensure All Dams Are Safe

This month we mark the ten-year anniversary of a man-made disaster that should not have happened. On March 14, 2006, Ka Loko Dam on Hawaii's island of Kauai broke, sending almost 400 million gallons of water four miles downstream until reaching the ocean. The resulting wave of water reached about 20 feet in height destroying trees, cars, and homes, and killing seven people, including a pregnant woman and a young child. The flood resulted in millions of dollars in property damage, as well as extensive environmental damage.

The Ka Loko Dam failed after 40 days of heavy rainfall overtopped the dam, in the vicinity of where the dam's original spillway had been filled in by the owner. A lack of resources and sufficient legal authority within State government at that time enabled the dam owner to ignore his duty to address safety concerns at the dam prior to the disaster.

"The tenth anniversary of the dam's failure reminds us of the potential dangers posed by dams and the critical importance of both responsible dam ownership and strong dam safety programs," said Lori Spragens, executive director of the [Association of State Dam Safety Officials](http://www.damsafety.org) (ASDSO). "Most dam failures are preventable disasters. Dam owners must keep their dams in the state of repair required by prudence, due regard for life and property, and the application of sound engineering principles. The quality of dam maintenance, emergency planning, and enforcement programs directly affects the safety of communities, as sadly demonstrated on Kauai. With more than 87,000 dams of regulatory size in the U.S., we all have a stake in dam safety."

As a result of increased funding for its dam safety program in the wake of the Ka Loko Dam failure, Hawaii's improved regulation of local dams has helped keep citizens safe and allowed downstream communities to thrive.

ASDSO works with dam owners and state and federal lawmakers to create and maintain strong dam safety programs. [According to ASDSO's data](#), the nationwide number of high-hazard-potential dams, or dams whose failure would cause the loss of human life, has increased to more than 11,700, about 15 percent of which are considered deficient, or susceptible to failure. ASDSO calculates that it would take about \$18 billion to bring these dams up to current safety standards. Because inadequate funding is often the primary impediment to dam rehabilitation efforts, it is imperative that funding sources are developed to meet this need. ASDSO supports federal and state legislative efforts to create loan and grant programs for dam rehabilitation funding.

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The Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) is a national, non-profit organization founded in 1984 and dedicated to improving dam safety through research, education, and communication. Web: www.damsafety.org