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# RESERVOIRS AND FLOODING



**OXFORDSHIRE  
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**A reservoir is usually an artificial lake where water is kept for use. Some reservoirs supply water for household and industrial use, others serve different purposes such as fishing lakes or leisure.**

### **Legislation**

#### THE FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT ACT 2010

Reservoir owners and operators are responsible for the safety of their reservoirs. They must also consider the need for planning permission or environmental consents when building, modifying, operating or maintaining a reservoir.

Currently, all reservoirs that hold at least 25,000 cubic metres of water above ground level must be registered with the Environment Agency (in England) or Natural Resources Wales, as appropriate. Smaller reservoirs are subject to safety regulations but do not need to be registered (as yet).

The 2010 Act differs from the previous Reservoir Act of 1975 Act in proposing that arrangements for reservoir safety should be based on the flood risk (from failure of the retaining dam) rather than the size of the reservoir alone.

Some additional legislation (regulations and orders) is needed before the new law can be fully implemented, so it is likely that many of the provisions in the Act will not come into force for some time yet.

The proposed changes would include:

- Reservoirs that hold more than 10,000 cubic metres of water may need to be registered in future (subject to Ministers agreement)
- Large raised reservoirs assessed as 'high risk' would be subject to full regulation, but medium/low risk would not (but would still need to be registered)
- All incidents at reservoirs would need to be reported (not just those at registered sites, as now).

### **Legal Obligations**

Reservoir owners/operators must:

- Register a reservoir by contacting the Environment Agency Reservoir Safety Team
- Appoint qualified Civil Engineers (from the 'Panel Engineer' lists) to construct, supervise and inspect the reservoir

- Prepare a flood plan and flood map, including emergency responses and measures to reduce the effects of flooding by water escaping from the reservoir
- Ensure arrangements are in place to enable emergency services to respond effectively to any uncontrolled release of water from the reservoir.
- Report any Reservoir Emergency to the Environment Agency on:

**0800 807060**

The operator will need to know if it is a flood or pollution incident, and if an actual or potential emergency.

Once the incident is under control, the Environment Agency Reservoir Safety Team should also be informed:

Email: [reservoirs@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:reservoirs@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Tel: **01392 442001** (9am-5pm Monday to Friday)

### Living near a Reservoir

Reservoir flood risk maps are available here:

[http://watermaps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiyby.aspx?layerGroups=default&lang=\\_e&topic=reservoir&ep=map&scale=1&y=355134&textonly=off&x=357683#x=357683&y=355134&scale=1](http://watermaps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiyby.aspx?layerGroups=default&lang=_e&topic=reservoir&ep=map&scale=1&y=355134&textonly=off&x=357683#x=357683&y=355134&scale=1)

Flooding from a reservoir can extend 50 miles or more from the site itself, so it is not just the people living and working in the immediate area who could be affected. The lie of the land could also mean the water is channelled in certain directions, making flooding worse some distance away.

### Emergencies

You may be alerted to an emergency in one or more of the following ways:

- Emergency services in your area may knock on your door or use a loudhailer system
- You may be given an evacuation card detailing specific advice about where you should go
- Helicopter Skyshout (public address system) warnings may be given
- News alerts via local radio or television.

To prepare in advance for reservoir flooding it is useful to:

- Know your risk – use the link above to see if you live or work near a reservoir
- Plan where to go if you get caught in reservoir flooding
- Put together a 'Grab Bag' of things you might need in an emergency – there is a checklist in the 'Are you Ready?' PDF document:

<https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/AreYouReadyBooklet.pdf>

- Know who you would need to contact and how
- Plan for the loss of mains electricity, gas and telecommunications.

## Further Information

To report warning signs or problems with a reservoir ring the Environment Agency Incident Helpline on:

**0800 807060**

Further information on reservoirs (including flood plans and maps) is available from GOV.UK here:

**<https://www.gov.uk/reservoirs-a-guide-for-owners-and-operators>**

Further information on flooding is available from GOV.UK here:

**<https://www.gov.uk/flood-risk-management-information-for-flood-risk-management-authorities-asset-owners-and-local-authorities#reservoir-safety>**

To register or update information on a reservoir, or to view the reservoir register:

Email: **[reservoirs@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:reservoirs@environment-agency.gov.uk)**

Or write to:

**Reservoir Safety Team, Manley House, Kestrel Way, Exeter, Devon, EX2 7LQ**

The lists of Panel Engineers are available from GOV.UK here:

**<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contact-details-of-engineers-on-the-all-reservoirs-panel>**

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