



Left: Calero Reservoir.
Inset: Aerial view of Calero Dam and Reservoir.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District hired an engineering consultant to perform a seismic stability study of Calero Dam. The water district received results from a limited preliminary analysis of the study, which focuses on the stability of Calero Dam during a large earthquake.

These results show that sand and gravel from the underlying creek bed are present below the downstream embankment and may liquefy during a large earthquake on a nearby fault. As a result, the dam could deform significantly, risking an uncontrolled release of the reservoir water.

Further studies on the dam will yield more information that will allow the water district to determine the amount of movement and slumping, known as deformation, which could occur in a large earthquake and what corrective measures are needed to ensure public safety and continue dam operations.

Based on these limited preliminary analyses, the water district will temporarily operate Calero Reservoir to keep the water level at least 14-feet below the spillway and 20-feet below the crest for an added margin of safety until completing more detailed analyses. The water district is reviewing this recommendation with the Division of Safety and Dams.

The water district had been operating Calero Reservoir with a restriction of 6-feet below the spillway or 12-feet below the crest. This was based on an earlier study by the Division of Safety and Dams. The additional operating restrictions should contain and prevent an uncontrolled release of the water if a large earthquake occurred.

As a long term solution, the completion of studies on the dam will confirm whether modifications to the dam are needed so that it can withstand large earthquakes.

Contact us

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