
HAZARD WARNINGS

THE HAZARD WARNING and Preparedness Program is the Survey's mechanism for assuring that the public and its officials get hazard information quickly and in a suitable form. Begun in 1976 in response to congressional legislation, this program coordinates, evaluates, and disseminates information and warnings of geologic-related hazards.

Survey guidelines require that you document a geologic hazard upon discovering it and, if the danger is not imminent, contact your Branch or District Chief, who will forward the assessment through your Division to the Assistant Director for Engineering Geology. The Division Chief is generally responsible for getting expert review of the data and conclusions. The Assistant Director for Engineering Geology is generally responsible for getting approval from the Director to issue a formal Geologic Hazard Warning and to forward the notification to appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies and to the public through news media.

As stated in the Federal Register of January 31, 1984, a Geologic Hazard Warning by the Director of the Geological Survey is a formal statement about a specific geologic condition that poses a significant threat to the public and for which some timely response would be expected. The criteria for a Geologic Hazard Warning are as follows:

- ▶ A degree of risk is greater than normal for the area or a hazardous condition has recently developed or has only recently been recognized.
- ▶ A threat warrants consideration of a near-term public response.

Information that fails to meet these criteria may also be sent by the Director to public officials, but such information would not constitute a Hazard Warning.

IF YOU DETECT A GEOLOGIC HAZARD

If you identify a hazardous condition, you should document the hazard as precisely and completely as possible. A Geologic Hazard Warning contains the following elements:

- ▶ A description of the geologic or other pertinent conditions that cause the concern.
- ▶ Factors that indicate such conditions are hazardous.

- ▶ Location or area that may be affected.
- ▶ Estimated severity and time of occurrence, if available information justifies such estimates.
- ▶ A probabilistic statement, if possible, on the likelihood that a given event or events will occur within a specific time period.
- ▶ A description of continued Survey involvement and an estimate of what and when additional information might be available.

If the hazard is a clear risk to life and property and there appears to be insufficient time to contact a responsible Survey official for scientific evaluation and policy review, you should make every reasonable effort to contact the affected parties and appropriate local public officials as soon and as directly as possible.

Direct notification to public officials in such emergencies should be limited to a statement of the conditions observed; it should not be expressed as an official Geologic Hazard Warning. As soon as possible after communicating the information to local public officials, you should notify both your supervisor and the Assistant Director for Engineering Geology of (1) the hazard observations, (2) the actions you took, (3) the current status of the hazardous condition, and (4) the actions taken by public officials. Information concerning hazardous situations will be submitted, upon receipt of such information, to a scientific evaluation panel for review and appropriate action.

For further information about the Hazard Warning and Preparedness Program, contact the Office of the Assistant Director for Engineering Geology, National Center, Reston, VA, 22092.