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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

## FACT SHEET

## TETON DAM DISASTER RELIEF ACT

The President today signed into law the Teton Dam Disaster Relief Act which authorized payments for damages resulting from the failure of the Teton Dam.

BACKGROUND

On the morning of June 5, 1976, a newly completed Bureau of Reclamation dam on the Teton River in Idaho burst, causing several deaths and widespread destruction. The damage toll includes:

- Eleven dead, including 6 drownings.
- Property damage estimated at between \$400 and \$500 million.

ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS

The Administration took the following steps to provide relief for the victims:

- On Sunday, June 6, 1976, upon request of Governor Cecil D. Andrus of Idaho, the President declared a major disaster, authorizing Federal assistance to the victims. Federal agencies under the coordination of the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration were mobilized to work with State and local agencies to provide services such as temporary housing and repair of irrigation systems for the area affected by the flood.
- On June 11, 1976, the President submitted a request to Congress for a supplemental appropriation of \$200 million to provide payments to people who were injured or whose property was damaged by the flood.
- On July 12, 1976, the President signed into law the above appropriations, and compensation payments began for claimants. As of August 11, 1976, 1,890 claims totalling \$68 million have been filed with the Department of Interior. (The President has indicated he will request additional funds for compensation if necessary.)

RELIEF EFFORT

Federal, State and local officials worked closely with private organizations to mobilize assistance for the victims of the Teton Dam disaster. The American Red Cross, the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints, the Mennonite Disaster Service and the World Relief Committee of the

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Christian Reformed Church and Teton Interfaith Director Task Force performed outstanding service for the general relief effort.

TETON DAM RELIEF ACT

Legislation authorizing the compensation for damages inflicted by the Teton Flood was introduced on June 9, 1976 by Senators Frank Church and James McClure. The bill provides express statutory authority, in addition to the existing Public Works Appropriations Act Authority, for the Secretary of the Interior to fully compensate all persons who suffered death, personal injury, or loss of property as a direct result of the dam failure.

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