

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
UPON SIGNING S. 3542
TETON DAM DISASTER ASSISTANCE

THE ROSE GARDEN

11:03 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Members of Congress and members of the Executive Branch and representatives of various volunteer agencies. First, I want to welcome you all here. I will read a statement and then will sign the legislation.

No Government has the power to eliminate tragedy from human experience, but Government can and Government should act quickly to minimize the pain of a great disaster and help to begin the healing process.

On the morning of June 5, 1976, the Teton Dam in Eastern Idaho ruptured and the flood waters carried death and destruction to thousands of families in the Snake River Valley. The next day, after conferring with Governor Andrus, I declared the affected county to be a Federal disaster area and emergency relief centers were quickly established to provide assistance to the victims.

Five days after, I submitted to Congress legislation appropriating \$200 million for compensation of the victims of this terrible tragedy. Within ten days following the flood, special offices were established and operating in Idaho to handle damage claims.

Today, I am signing a bill which provides legislative authority for the compensation of personal and property damage sustained by the victims of the flood. Many of those claims have already been settled and the money is now at work rebuilding the lives of the survivors.

The legislation which I signed today insures that this vital aid will continue. Let me thank the Members of Congress for their strong, bipartisan support of this measure. I know, for example, how hard the Idaho delegation worked on it. Great credit must also be given to the many volunteer and church groups represented here today which played such a key role in the initial relief efforts.

MORE

Page 2

Each of them displayed great courage under exceptionally difficult conditions. Together, the public and private sectors of this great country have extended to the victims not just our sympathy, but a strong and steady helping hand.

END

(AT 11:05 A.M. EDT)