

MEDIA RELEASE



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Department of Water Affairs and Forestry - Chief Directorate: Communication
Services

LYDENBURG FLOODING

Date: 12 December 2001

During the afternoon of 11 December 2001 the Lydenburg area experienced high intensity rainfall (about 85 mm within 1½ hour) that caused a flash flood in the Dorps River and the Sterkspruit that pass through low-lying areas of Lydenburg. The flash flood was due to high rainfall only, not to a partial dam failure as reported by some media sources earlier.

It has been confirmed that the Lydenburg Town Dam (formally known as the PTC du Plessis Dam) on the Sterkspruit (a small tributary of the Dorps River) is still intact and structurally sound. The 1,0 m raising of the spillway by means of a patented flashboard system is also still intact. The raising was carried out in 1993 and was approved by the Dam Safety Office of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. This system was designed to bend over gradually during floods in excess of the 50-year flood.

According to present information 6 people lost their lives and a number of houses and the caravan park were partially flooded. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry regrets the loss of life and loss of property, and would like to advise people to be aware of the dangers of flash floods, fast flowing rivers and river crossings or bridges. Development such as houses, caravan parks, offices, etc. within flood zones of rivers is discouraged. Dam owners are requested to ensure that their emergency preparedness plans are up to date and readily available. Dam owners should also be alert at all times.

Department specialists will investigate whether the flood lines were correctly determined and whether there had been development in the danger area below the flood lines.

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