



Vermont Emergency Management
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DATE: April 15, 2026
TO: Senator Anne Watson, Chair, Senate Environmental
FROM: Eric Forand, Director, Division of Emergency Management, Dept. of Public Safety
SUBJECT: H.778 -An act relating to dam safety

Chair Watson- Please accept this memorandum as written testimony to the referenced bill currently in your committee.

STATE OF VERMONT EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANNING PILOT PROJECT; PILOT

(page 2, line 5)

There is the potential that as VEM works through the pilot it becomes clear that it is effective for there to be one EOP for all the towns instead of an EOP for each town. Therefore, we recommend more flexibility in the language to allow this change if it is needed.

VEM recommends language change - (2) The set of EOPs for each dam shall include ~~an EOP~~ actions for each municipality in the inundation zone of the dam

(page 2, line 9-14)

When lists are used, the intention is to ensure certain organizations are included but this can inadvertently exclude other organizations by the lack of them being included. VEM and FEMA use the term “Whole Community” to talk about everyone that is involved in the response.

FEMA Definition of Whole Community –

Whole Community Defined As a concept, Whole Community is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. By doing so, a more effective path to societal security and resilience is built. In a sense, Whole Community is a philosophical approach on how to think about conducting emergency management.

VEM recommends language change -the Division shall coordinate with and collect input from ~~these entities~~ the Whole Community traditionally involved in regional and municipal emergency management,

~~including municipal officials; emergency responders; regional planning commissions; State and regional search and rescue partners, including swiftwater rescue providers; and other relevant interested parties located in the regional area that would be inundated if the dam were to fail.....~~

(page 3, line 11)

The proposed language above about, detailing how the “Whole Community” needs to be involved makes this section duplicative. This is also another list that is not all inclusive, so could cause issues later.

VEM recommends language change - ~~(4) engage facilities that house vulnerable populations, such as schools, shelters for the unhoused, and senior living communities, in the plan development;~~

(page 6, line 1)

VEM is not a funding source and would not have access or knowledge of any potential funding sources for this future implementation of these plans.

VEM recommends language change - ~~(3) recommend potential funding sources that the Division or individual municipalities could access to complete or contract for the completion of EOPs;~~

(page 6, line 4)

Regional Planning Commissions would not be responsible for the writing or executing of these EOP once they are written. They may be involved in the pilot project but once the plan is complete, their involvement is removed.

VEM recommends language change - ...recommend how to best educate municipalities, ~~regional planning commissions~~, and emergency service providers about the need for and importance of EOPs for dams....

(page 6, line 10)

This list only defines a couple of the entities that should be conducting exercises, VEM recommends removing the list so more entities can be included.

VEM recommends language change - (6)recommend how often ~~the Division, regional planning commissions, or municipalities should conduct practice emergency response~~ exercises should be conducted for to validate the EOPs required under subsection.....

In-closing: Thank you in advance for your consideration, if you need additional information please contact me directly.

Eric Forand, Director, Division of Emergency Management, Department of Public Safety