



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**®

St. Paul District

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Public Affairs

Corps Facts

Levee Terms, Definitions

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Levee

An earthen embankment, floodwall or structure along a water course whose purpose is flood risk reduction or water conveyance.

Corps' Authority

There is no single agency with responsibility for levee oversight nationwide. The Corps has specific and limited authorities for approximately 2,000 levees nationwide.

Local Responsibility

The responsibilities of local levee partners are broad and include levee safety; land use planning and development; building codes and operations, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation and replacement of the levee.

Levee Certification

The certification of levees for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Flood Insurance Program is the responsibility of the local levee owner or sponsor.

Types of Levees

- **Federally Authorized Levee:** Designed and built by the Corps, then turned over to a local sponsor to operate, maintain, repair and replace the levee.
- **Non-federally Authorized Levee:** Designed and built by a non-federal agency, which is responsible for the operation, maintenance, repair and replacement of the levee.
- **Private or Corporate-Owned Levee:** The Corps has no responsibility for private or corporate-owned levees.

Overtopping

Water levels exceed the crest elevation of a levee and flow into protected areas. Levee may be damaged but not compromised. Flooding occurs from overflow/overwash (waves) and other sources. The levee must be inspected.

Overtopping Breach

A breach whose cause is known to be a result of overtopping (system exceeded). The levee has been compromised after overtopping and must be repaired to function prior to the next event.

Breach

A rupture, break or gap whose cause has not been determined.

Failure Breach

A breach for which a cause of failure is known based on an investigation to determine the cause.