Implementing Severn Trent Water’s People Plan to become the best in Great Britain at managing reservoir safety

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SYNOPSIS. Reservoirs provide a vital service in storing the country's water, but the consequences of failure are truly terrifying. Managing reservoir safety remains a major business risk for all owners. Great Britain has an excellent record of reservoir safety, with no deaths following dam failure since the introduction in 1930 of reservoir safety regulations that sought to embed learning and lower risk. However, the unprecedented flooding of the summer of 2007 brought reservoirs into sharp focus and has led to regulatory change that will have a major impact on all dam owners.

For Severn Trent Water, one of Great Britain's leading water companies, the devastating floods severely tested our reservoirs, challenging our resilience and exposing vulnerability. We recognise that reservoir safety is one of the biggest business risks we face and is one that we manage vigorously. This paper details the strategic development and implementation of Severn Trent Water's People Plan, to achieve our aim “to be recognised as the best in Great Britain at managing reservoir safety”. It describes the identification, assessment and management of business risks; the delivery and application of a new visual management system for dams and reservoirs; the integral and essential role of employee engagement; the application of knowledge management; embedding lessons learned; and our proactive response to the major changes in legislation.