

Dam Safety Inspection & Audit Results for 2017



In 2017, the AER conducted 36 inspections of tailings and water ponds and their dams. AER inspections ensure that these structures are designed, constructed, operated, maintained, and decommissioned safely, and that owners are prepared to respond in the event of an emergency. Four audits of the dam safety management systems of Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Imperial Oil, Grand Cache Coal, and Westmoreland Coal were also done as part of the AER's periodic audit of dam owners.

When a noncompliance is discovered, the AER issues a notice to the owner. The owner takes action to resolve the noncompliance and the AER is notified. In 2017, two noncompliances, neither of which posed a significant risk, were found at oil sands mines. Notices of noncompliance were sent to the owners, and the noncompliances were resolved.

Inspections

Sector	# of inspections that found at least one noncompliance	# of inspections that found no noncompliances	Total
Oil sands	2	22	24
Coal	0	7	7
Oil and gas	0	5	5
Total	2	34	36

Audits

Sector	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	Total
Oil sands	1	1	0	0	0	2
Coal	0	1	1	0	0	2
Oil and gas	N/A*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	1	2	1	0	0	4

* N/A: Not applicable.

Understanding audit categories

Very good – the dam owner's Dam Safety Management System (DSMS) is fully documented and implemented. No action is required.

Good – the dam owner's DSMS is largely documented and largely implemented. Minor action is required to fully document and implement.

Fair – the dam owner's DSMS has gaps in documentation and implementation. Action is required to fully document and implement.

Poor – the dam owner's DSMS is poorly documented and poorly implemented. Significant action is required, without delay, to fully document and implement.

Very poor – the dam owner's DSMS does not exist or is non-functioning. Major action is required, without delay, to document and implement.