

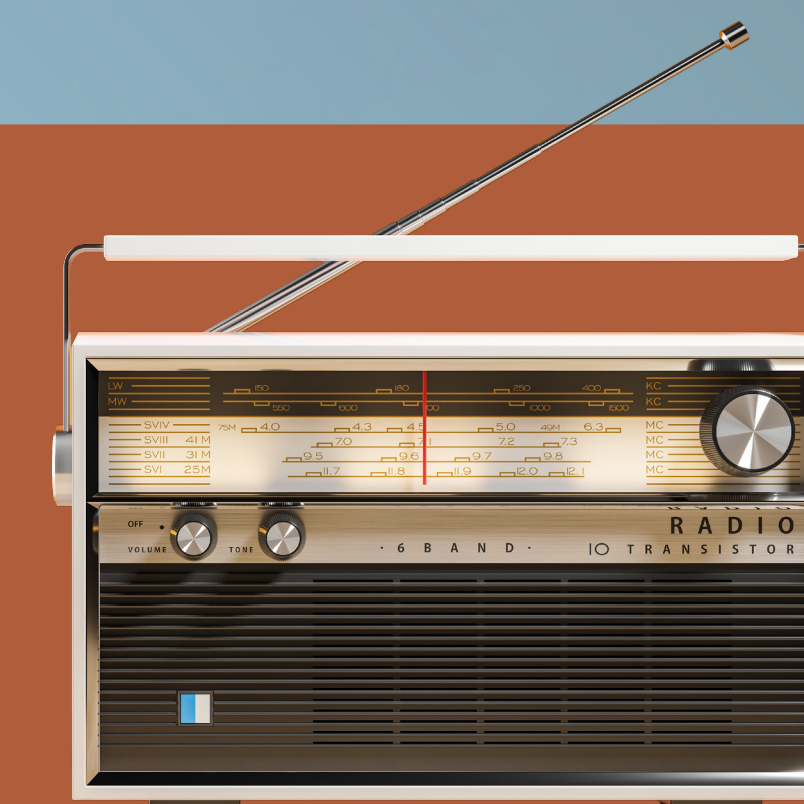


## Teton Dam A great disaster

*“We all sat there on the lawn in front of the office and watched in horror as the water from the dam first filled the canyon completely to the brim in mere seconds on its way to where it broke into the valley. Then it spread out, pushing a dust and debris storm in front of it. It became ever wider—from our vantage point we could see nearly all of the floodplain being invaded. Homes were being destroyed, lives changed, farms and land desecrated.”*

*“Duane looked at me and said, as he sat there in bewilderment, ‘I hope everyone got out.’ ”*

**—Eyewitness account from the day of the Teton Dam failure**



**Communication saved countless lives**  
Authorities were alerted by an onsite worker 57 minutes before the dam failed. In an era before cellphones and internet, a regional radio station quickly positioned itself at the dam to report its collapse. It broadcast crucial warnings to those downstream, enabling the evacuation of about 35,000 people in less than an hour.



Cattle running away from the encroaching floodwaters.  
Courtesy of Museum of Rexburg: Home of the Teton Flood Exhibit



Home located on 2nd E. and Smith Park in Rexburg. The front lawn is covered in mud, hay bales, and other debris.  
Courtesy of Museum of Rexburg: Home of the Teton Flood Exhibit



View of Rexburg's flooded Main Street.  
Courtesy of Museum of Rexburg: Home of the Teton Flood Exhibit

As news of the Teton Dam failure spread, many residents watched from places of safety as their homes, farms, businesses, and communities were inundated with floodwaters. Local leaders quickly emerged from city, county, church, and state agencies to collaborate to provide immediate support, relief, and organization for the communities and citizens affected. Many residents were separated from families, some not knowing for days whether their loved ones had survived.