

Earthquake: Interstate-5 bridge, others slated for ODOT work

Continued from page 6

that it would create a domino effect and cause Lookout Point and Dexter dams to break also, he said.

However, the greatest danger to the Hills Creek Dam is not a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, but a crustal event, which occurs about every 2,500 years, Hinds said.

Failure of a dam would create massive flooding, destroying bridges and roadways.

"It would be catastrophic if one of these structures failed," Hinds said.

Hinds stresses that dams are heavily monitored by engineers and are continually under seismic inspection.

In addition, a number of earthquakes worldwide in past 10 years have shown embankment dams, like Fern Ridge and Hills Creek, performing better than expected, Hinds said.

Unprepared infrastructure

The Oregon Department of Transportation has conducted an intense analysis of seismic conditions for all roadways and bridges in the state over the last several years, said Lou Torres, an ODOT spokesman.

In Lane County, ODOT is working on several bridges and overpasses, Torres said.

Currently, the Interstate-5 bridge over the Willamette River is a temporary structure, which ODOT aims to replace permanently by 2010, said Tim Potter, ODOT Region 2 bridge

geo/hydro unit manager.

However, the temporary bridge was designed without extreme seismic considerations, Potter said. In the event of a major earthquake, these bridges would probably not collapse, but might not be usable, he said.

Eugene Water and Electric Board non-headquarters facilities and warehouses, built in 1952, harbor the majority of EWEB's response vehicles, equipment and supplies, and they are susceptible to collapse in an earthquake, said Lance Robertson, EWEB spokesman.

"It would definitely hamper our ability to get power turned back on in timely way," Robertson said.

The need for science

Scientific input is critical in developing disaster emergency response plans, geology professor Weldon said.

"There's a tendency for political or economic interests to basically ignore science if it's difficult to deal with," he said.

Weldon used the example of Lane County Emergency Manager Linda Cook only having one available staff member to assist in disaster preparation for the entire county.

Weldon said the city's plan for disaster mitigation and management covers the ground, but is not very detailed and could use additional scientific input.



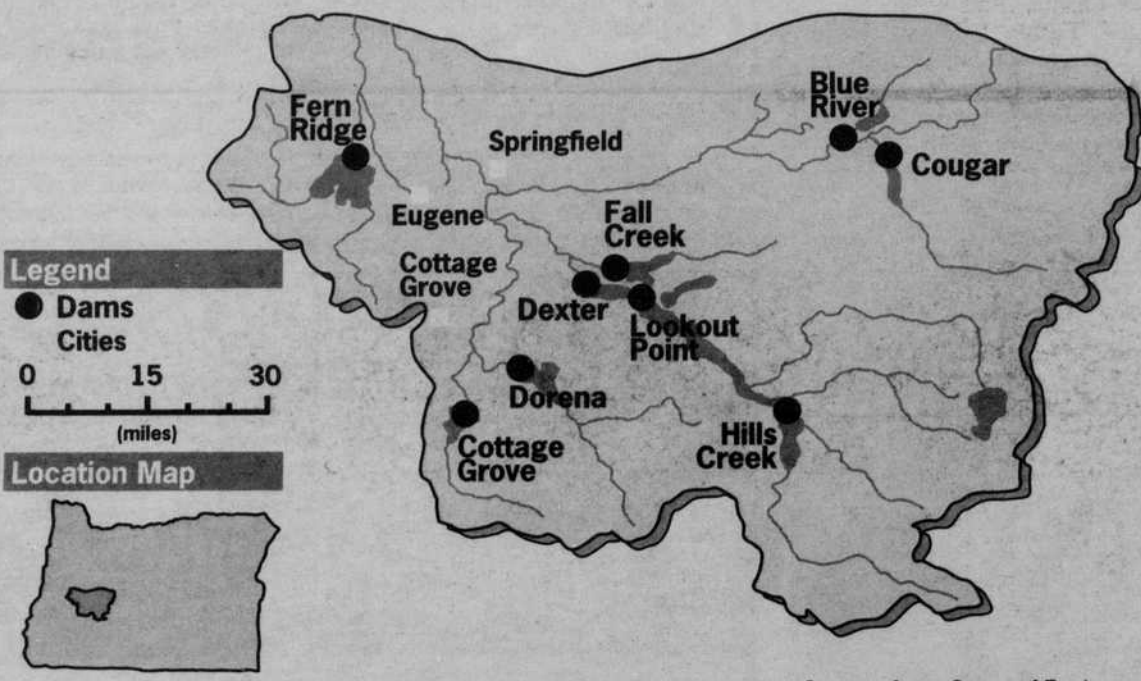
KATE HORTON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Andre LeDuc, program director for the Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup, points out the potential dangers of Hendricks Hall.

"Nature doesn't really care if we're paying attention or not," he said.

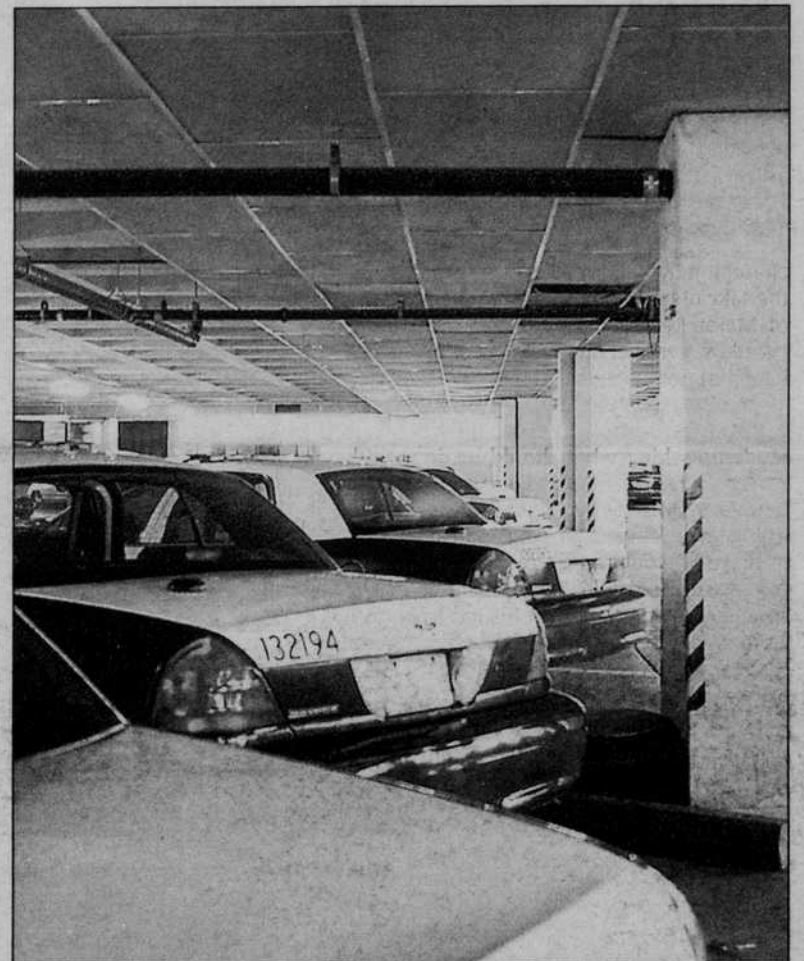
Contact the crime, health and safety reporter at kgagnon@dailyemerald.com

Dams of the Eugene-Willamette Basin area



Source: Army Corps of Engineers

CHRIS TODD | GRAPHIC ARTIST



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Police and other city-owned vehicles are parked beneath City Hall when not in use. The building is not up to current seismic codes and could potentially collapse in the event of an earthquake.

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