

State Raises Hazard Classification At Coal Ash Dams In Lumberton

By Administrator

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RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - Based on new information from Duke Energy, state regulators have moved to ensure to safeguard Lumberton area residents from a potential failure of two coal ash pond dams.

To that end, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has raised the hazard classification for the dams at the Weatherspoon Steam Station to “high hazard,” the most serious of the three classifications. The classifications are used to measure the downstream damage potential if a dam breaches, but the classifications do not relate to the condition of a dam. According to a news release from regulators, the classifications were changed by state Dam Safety officials after Duke Energy provided the state with emergency action plans that show that a failure of either dam could severely damage downstream property or endanger residents living in four homes near the Weatherspoon coal ash impoundments. Because of the status change, the dams will be inspected once a year. Duke is required to handle periodic checks.

Dams are classified as “high hazard” if a failure would likely cause loss of life or serious damage to property or roads. Before the dams were reclassified, one of the dams at Weatherspoon was classified as “exempt” while the other was classified as an “intermediate” hazard, the agency said.