

From Hebgen Lake, Madison River Earthquake Disaster Report, August 1959
2004.75.754

PART II. SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

A. SUMMARY OF ACTION - WEST YELLOWSTONE-HEBGEN LAKE-MADISON CANYON SECTOR

August 18, 1: 30 a.m. to 8: 00 p.m. , First word of the disaster reached State Civilian Defense Director Hugh Potter at Helena at 1:30 e..m • on August 18. The message was transmitted through the. OCDM national warning system. Reports of the. disaster in the Hebgen Lake area were relayed by "ham" radio operators at Hest Yellowstone. The "no" reports on the dam were received by OCD until 4:30 a.m. At that time Gallatin County Sheriff Don Skerrits informed Director Hugh Potter that the dam was holding.

Director Potter took action, based upon this first positive report at 4:30 a.m., to alert State agencies of the emergency situation. Action 11aS taken immediately by the Montana Highway Department, State Highway Patrol; Montana Aeronautics Commission, Montana Fish & Game Department, the Governor's . office, and other State units to accomplish their respective missions in disaster mobilization and relief.

During this period, the 4th Air Force Headquarters at Hamilton Air Force Base, California, hearing the national warning system disaster message, placed all of their search and rescue resources at -the disposal of Montana's governor and State civilian defense director. Within a short time rescue squadrons and support groups, with fixed wing and helicopter aircraft, fully manned and equipped, were moving to West Yellowstone from:

- 41st Air Rescue Squadron, Hamilton Air Force Base, California
- 2849th Air Base Wing Rescue, Hill Air Force Base, Utah
- 3638th Flying Training Squadron, Stead Air Force Base, Nevada
- 4061st Support Group, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana

Montana Aeronautics Commission personnel, operating under the Civilian. Defense Mobilization Plan, were dispatched to West Yellowstone to direct air traffic control and related services at West Yellowstone airport.

Other Federal agencies and western state governors volunteered all-out assistance. Canadian Government organizations offered their services. Idaho State Civilian Defense, Idaho State Police, and Idaho State Highway Department personnel immediately started action to move their forces into West Yellowstone to assist with evacuation and disaster relief.