



Canada's First Mining Publication
[FREE NEWS ALERT](#)

[DAILY NEWS](#) Jul 29, 2015 4:12 PM - 0 comments

TAILINGS: Dam breaches increasing in frequency

2015-07-29

WASHINGTON, DC – A new report available at **Earthworks Action** notes that catastrophic tailings spills are occurring with increasing frequency around the world. Moreover, the new study, [The Risk, Public Liability, and Economics of Tailings Storage Facility Failures](#), points out the failures of regulators and engineers to create truly best practices to minimize financial and environmental risks.

The report says that half the serious dam failures, 33 of 67 in the past 70 years, have occurred in the 20 years between 1990 and 2009. It predicts there will be a further 11 failures costing approximately \$6 billion between 2010 and 2019. The average cost of each spill is \$543 million, as measured by the attempts of regulators to recoup cleanup costs from mine operators.

The study says, "The increasing rate of tailings dam failures is propelled by, not in spite of, modern mining practices." The size of tailings management facilities, particularly those in excess of 5 million m³, is to blame. Such large ponds have grown to allow mining of lower grades of ore.

The outlook is gloomy: "Mining companies cannot afford, and cannot secure insurance to cover, the costs of catastrophic failures. Losses, both economic and ecological, are in large part either permanent and non-recoverable, or recovery – to the extent physically possible – funded by public monies [in the US]."

Earthworks Action (EarthworksAction.org) has released the new report to commemorate the one-year anniversary on Aug. 4, 2014, of the Mount Polley tailings dam failure.

Related Topics

[Mineral Processing](#)

[Mining](#)

Monitor These Topics

- [Mineral Processing](#)
- [Mining](#)

