

AUDIT

Follow-up audit on the implementation of a key recommendation: supervision of water retaining facilities

Swiss Federal Office of Energy

KEY FACTS

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) has carried out a follow-up audit at the Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE) on the implementation of the key recommendation from the 2023 report 'Critical infrastructure protection audit – Supervision of water retaining facilities'.⁴ For the monitoring and surveillance of safety supervision, the SFAO recommend that the SFOE prepare and introduce a basic framework as part of a safety management system. This should cover the SFOE's direct supervision of around 200 of the largest water retaining facilities throughout Switzerland, and their indirect supervision of the canton with around 200 facilities under supervision.

Basic framework for the safety management system is incomplete

The SFAO identified that the SFOE had not yet fully implemented the recommendation. The requested basic framework for a safety management system at SFOE level has not yet been fully prepared and introduced. The individual measures on safety supervision of water retaining facilities which the authority has taken, cover various parts of a safety management system. The objective of a basic framework which would integrate the existing security concept into a systematic framework has only been partially achieved. A comprehensive safety management system has to incorporate all the levels, including the monitoring of the safety supervision. The Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC) bears the responsibility. The corresponding coordination between the SFOE and the General Secretariat of DETEC (GS-DETEC) is still outstanding.

The recommendation may only be considered completed when the complete data system for the supervision has been introduced. The SFOE will be able to use it to create requirements for significant progress throughout the entire process, from planning and risk management, the monitoring of the operational supervision, to reporting.

The delay in implementing the recommendation is all the more remarkable given that in 2010 an external security report prepared on behalf of the GS-DETEC had already highlighted the shortcoming. The SFAO cannot comprehend why the SFOE reported the recommendation as having been implemented despite obvious shortcomings. The SFAO expects rapid introduction of the necessary steps by the SFOE, to enable completion of the requested basic framework for this critical area of water retaining facilities.

⁴ Critical infrastructure protection audit – Supervision of water retaining facilities (SFAO-22349)