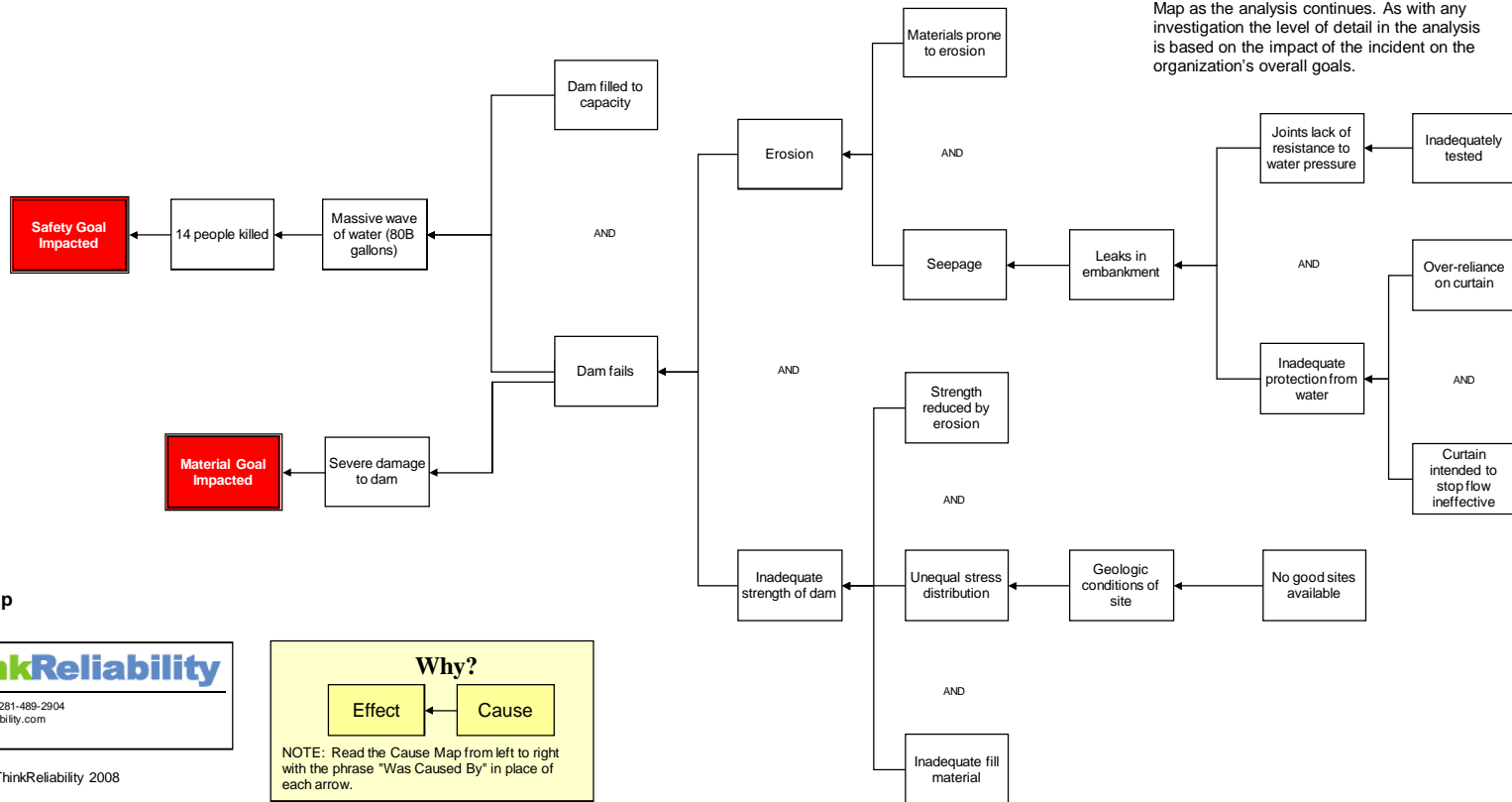


**Failure of the Teton Dam  
Teton River, Idaho  
June 5, 1976**

On June 5, 1976, workers were called to the Teton Dam to attempt to repair a leak. Workers in bulldozers narrowly avoided being sucked into the dam with their equipment, and watched helplessly as the dam was breached. It would kill 14 people and cause nearly \$1.5 billion in property and environmental damage and claims. To examine what went wrong, we will use perform a root cause analysis. A thorough root cause analysis built as a Cause Map can capture all of the causes in a simple, intuitive format that fits on one page.

People were killed due to a massive wave of water released from the dam (which was filled to capacity) when it failed. The failure caused severe damage to the dam, which was never rebuilt. Erosion and inadequate strength led to the failure. Due to the less than ideal geological conditions of the site (which was picked because there were no "good" sites available), unequal stress distribution and inadequate fill material (which was used from the site) led to reduced strength. Susceptible materials and seepage from leaks in the embankment, caused by joints that were not resistant to water pressure due to inadequate testing, and inadequate protection from water due to an over-reliance on an ineffective curtain intended to stop flow, led to the erosion.

Many geologists had predicted problems with the dam before it was built. Although tragic, and expensive, the failure of the Teton Dam did lead to many reforms in the Bureau of Reclamation, who is responsible for dam safety.



Even more detail can be added to this Cause Map as the analysis continues. As with any investigation the level of detail in the analysis is based on the impact of the incident on the organization's overall goals.