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M: This is an interview with Governor Richard Lamm about the Big Thompson disaster, I am in his office in the Captiol Building in Denver, Colorado, the date is November 19, 1976, and my name is David McComb.

Well, let's start at the beginning. When did you first hear about the flood in the Big Thompson?

L: David, the first hint that we had that there was something amiss, but we weren't quite sure it would be classified as a flood, was when I came home on the evening of July 31. I had been to Central City with Senator Bob Packwood from Oregon and my wife, and we went up there to the Ballad of Baby Doe. I had a presentation to make for Centennial, for our Centennial, and of course, it rained very hard up in that canyon that evening, in fact.

Right at midnight, as I was making a presentation in the Teller Opera House, there was quite a storm, quite a very heavy rainfall. Although of course nowhere near, so we knew that there was, you know, thunderstorms in the area, but when I got home at 12:30, the State Patrol under a system that we initiated a couple of years ago here, whenever there's a possibility of—whether it's a prison riot or a natural disaster, we have an early warning system, and so at 12:30 we did have a call from the State Patrol saying that there, which was three or four hours old, when I got home, because I was out, saying that there was some possibility of local flooding up in the Big Thompson.

M: Okay, so you're informed about it, but you just go on with your normal routine, which I suppose was going to bed at that hour.

L: Yes, which is at that hour, which was going to bed, so I left instructions with the state patrolman that if there was, you know, if there was any other calls
on this matter, that I better be awoken.

Then at about, I'd say it's about twenty after three, was when I got a call from the State Representative Jim Lloyd, who was there on the scene, and informed me that the situation looked quite bad. That there were, as I recall his—there would have been seven bodies that had come floating out of the Canyon that they feared more, that they had, they really had more than just a lot of water; they had an actual flood.

That he was--he's a guy that I, whose judgment I respect. I do not know him to tend toward the hysterical. And he said that it was a bad situation, and he thought that State help was going to be needed. I asked him because of his, because he was calling more as a state legislator, and recognizing the jurisdiction is in the sheriff, that I get a call from the sheriff, or from the state patrolman that was on duty up there.

That, whatever help that they needed, of course, would be forthcoming, but that I had to, you know, I really had to have a more official evaluation.

About a half an hour later I got a call from the sheriff [Bob Watson]. And he said that they had real problems. At that point I made a judgment. We did not still know; he didn't know the magnitude of it also. All he knew was that there was a lot of water coming out of that canyon.

M: Right.

L: But I asked him what he, whether he thought that he needed say, some National Guard people, additional State Patrol, whether he needed helicopters, what exactly he needed, and he said, "Yes, I need all of them."

Well, now, that's a very--you know, standing there at 3:30 in the morning, let's say, when we mobilize the National Guard, that the State has to pick up the tab. I mean, to mobilize the National Guard, to get helicopters, at whatever the cost of it is, is a budgetary decision of no little magnitude.

But as I recall, I'm a little bit vague, and that's why these things are
good, because, as I recall, I asked to speak to the state patrolman up there, also, the captain in charge. Captain [W.E.] Thomas of our patrol was up there.

M: You're getting information, trying to get an idea of the magnitude of that.

L: Yes. I don't, you know, every decision that the Governor makes is very much on the line, and I, you know, I felt that I had to have some additional confirming information. I then called two people to get them out of bed and standing by. One was Chief [C. Wayne] Keith of the State Patrol, the other was General [W. David] Weller of our Department of Military Affairs, who's the .... As I recall the situation, Chief Keith got the phone call from his people up there.

In the meantime, I had General Weller .... I'm getting a little bit out of order. General Weller, I told him to start the initial machinery, to get the people up that were, you know, but not to actually furnish the call to the National Guard, but I wanted those people up so that the jungle drums, the network, would go out fast, and he did that.

Chief Keith then talked to his people up there, and this would have been now, 4:15, about 45 minutes, you know, an hour later, and maybe even a quarter to five by the time all of these things ....

M: No question of your authority to call these out, in your mind.

L: No, no, I never, no. I, actually, previous to this time, really, just in the... we spent a lot of time around here in that first year making sure that some of these procedures were correct. A lot of them came, by the way, with regard to the prison situation. You know, we've had some ....

M: Sure.

L: The shakedown, the other thing that we had in the first year of the administra-
tion. We fairly well, you know, knew, what the authority was and what it wasn't.

At about 4:30, somewhere in that area, I authorized, I can't even, you know, as I recall, a hundred and fifty people of the National, and asked some others, we started some, we asked some other people to get started immediately, we had some people standing by and really already notified. I think that they, already some people at that time, the officers had started to congregate at the Armory in Golden.

I got, I said to get another couple companies mobilized, and waiting and assembled in the Armory. And that set our hundred and fifty people up there.

Ironically, it turned out that the Fort Collins National Guard had, that night before, had left for summer training. So we did not have anybody right there on the scene that we could, you know, we could look to so we looked at a, I guess we got a Military Police unit, you better check on that, but that's my memory of it, is we had a Military Police unit.

And, all right, then I told Chief Keith to meet me and General Weller, and to get the helicopters ready, and authorized about three or four helicopters, to get them ready and to meet me out at the airport as soon as they could take off, which as I recall, was six or six o'clock or six-thirty.

As we were up at, we were up at the Big Thompson, about seven o'clock.

M: You've got a busy schedule, though. On August 1st.

L: Yes.

M: So that disrupts all that.

L: Yes. Well, that's right, that was another decision. I was supposed to, we were supposed to leave at 6:30 for the first of our, in the morning, for the first of our Centennial arrangements. I just told my wife to cover those.
And she did. And at six o'clock we assembled out at the Buckley Field, Chief Keith, General Weller, some of the other senior aides.

M: Okay, now look. Why would you have to go personally? You had your busy schedule, it was you know, Centennial Day, hundredth-year celebration. Why did you personally change your schedule to go up there and look at that?

L: Well, you know, first of all, a lot of it had to do with what actually extra help was needed. It was, it was becoming increasingly apparent that we had a big, we had a situation of fairly major magnitude on our hands.

And, you know, it just appeared to me, I think it would appear to anybody, that this would have to be a priority. By that time, you know that there were bodies floating down the Canyon, and we knew we had a problem.

M: Okay, so you drive up there, then.

L: It did, you know, those things do cross my mind, but I don't even think that was a wrestling match, you know, it really wasn't even a wrestling match. Whatever I would have missed, I knew that there was going to be a lot more criticism, you know, if we wouldn't have given all the help that was necessary.

I mean, if we needed the whole State Patrol, if we needed the National Guard, and I knew that, you know, only I can make that decision, I better get up there and look at it. So we got up there, as I recall, just a little bit after seven in the morning, just as it was getting light, and we went up a little bit up the Canyon, in the National Guard helicopter. We didn't, our pilot did not know exactly where the Canyon was.

In fact, I'll tell you that it was, there was confusion in my mind even, when we talked about, there's the Poudre Canyon, and then, there's a number of
different, there's three of four different canyons over there.

And I was a little bit ... I don't think even any of us knew exactly how many of those were flooding. The Big Thompson was one that we knew about, but we thought that some of the others might have been ... so anyway, we went back to the ... there had already been set up the first of what turned out to be a number of, even that day, of helicopter fields. As a matter of fact, I think they had already set up three helicopter fields. Which, by the way, brings me to somebody that I feel was a very, very big help and who kept his head about it and everything else, and that's that sheriff up there, I think, Sheriff Watson. Really performed a magnificent duty. He was, as you know, perhaps know, he's a heart patient.

M: Yes, he has a pacemaker.

L: You know, I just felt that he was just a magnificent, magnificent man. Anyway, our helicopter landed, you know, there was a field cleared there, there was already local citizens with hot coffee for the volunteers, I mean, the way that community pulled together, it was just incredible. Anticipating the story a little bit, when I got out of our first tour of the Canyon, about 10:30, you know there were, like sandwiches, the local ladies, who had been evacuated, the people right next to our helicopter port had been evacuated that night before. Because they had not known, you know, as soon as all of this, stuff they had evacuated, you know, they'd made sure that enough was covered. These people had already, then, their neighbors had already gotten back into their homes after spending the night down in the gymnasium, probably a sleepless night, and were already cooking soup and sandwiches and everything else.
M: You flew up there by helicopter.

L: Yes, flew up there by helicopter.

M: Landed, and then what?

L: Landed in the field, got into the patrol car, had the patrol car meet me, we went up to the restaurant up there ....

M: The Merri-Ax.

L: The Merri-Ax, yes, Merri-Ax, and at that point then I met with Sheriff Watson, whom I'd never met before, and his people, and we tried to get a better idea about what was necessary.

M: And then you did fly up the Canyon.

L: Yes, then we took Sheriff Watson, who had not been up the Canyon, in that first helicopter. We, you know, we took him, and General Weller, myself, Chief Keith, and I think his number-two person, the Sheriff's number-two person, went up on that first helicopter.

M: And what did you see?

L: Well, as I described it before, you know, it looked like, you know, a giant had run amuck up that canyon, tossing the ... I think that the overriding impression was just the eeriness of just driving up there, seeing cars in the river with their lights still on, you would, you would see sections of highway, you know, that there would be a car parked there, and then there would be no highway and maybe a hundred feet of highway left and then, just nothing but river on each side of it.

There was a State Patrol car, I recall, that was parked in the middle of one of these stretches. Just parked there, with its lights on, no road, fifty feet behind it no road, and about a hundred yards in front of it no road, but it was just sitting there parked. You know, we still have,
there's still a state patrol car up there someplace, isn't there ... and Purdy's car, it's never been found, has it?

Aide: It was found.

L: Oh, it was found, okay. But anyway, the capriciousness of the flood was very evident. I mean, you know, some homes standing, and people were standing on roofs, trailers every which way, but on the other hand, some homes that seemed to be fairly, that looked to me like they should have been hit, but they were fairly okay. The second overriding, other than the physical characteristics, just this incredible torrent of water that was still pouring through there was the people down there. I mean, the frustration about the fact that, look, we were in a reconnaissance helicopter, and there's no way that we could help all of those people that were down there, but they were people waving frantically, you know there were people clinging to, literally clinging to hillsides.

And I guess that we all just got very impacted about you know, there was: like all other things, we knew that the best thing we could do would be to get back.

You know, we had to find out what was going on up there and what else was necessary and then get back. I don't say that anybody was, you know, in the danger of falling in the stream. I mean, whoever was there had survived the night, and we knew would survive a couple more hours.

But I think that it nevertheless when people are waving their shirts at you, and, you know, you see people standing on roofs of houses and the stream on either side of them, then it is a feeling of great frustration,
and you're immediately led .... The human response is, "Let's go to help." I mean, you've got a helicopter there, but, you know, here's where I also think that our state people did a magnificent job.

I'd never worked with General Weller in an emergency situation before. He's one of my department heads. He's a guy that I've known, but he kept a very cool head about him. In fact, everybody did, and our purpose was to get up, get an idea of the magnitude, and then get back again and get as many other helicopters up there as we could.

M: Did that flight change your opinion about the magnitude of the emergency?
L: Yes, oh yes. I think it was very apparent at that time that we had a major disaster on our hands.

M: So then, what does that do to you as a Governor. Does that compel you to sort of unleash all your resources?

L: Well, when we got back, when we got back to the field, yes, that's exactly my reaction. I think that probably the natural reaction on something like that is saying, "Hey, there's a lot of people in trouble up there. We got to get them help."

We got back and we had a council of war, so to speak, and it was becoming very apparent that there were a few critical links that were necessary but just more people, or more trucks, or more jeeps, was not going to be necessary.

Even at that point, let's say, this is eight o'clock in the morning. You got a problem of people stumbling over each other. I mean, you had a lot of people there, that were at the field. You had the sheriff's deputies, and air emergency people, you had a lot of people and they were, a lot of them were doing good things, but that there's a certain limited, you know, you couldn't get up the Narrows, and you couldn't, there's no way you could get into
that canyon other than with a helicopter.

And so what we did was try to get all the helicopters that were necessary, but even then you can't get too many helicopters even in that canyon at one time. I mean, we had a couple of very close calls that have never been publicized, but a couple of helicopters just really, just missed each other until they established, you know, their traffic patterns.

So when we got back, even at that time, I recall thinking .... In fact, we got back and by about 9:30 the first mobilized National Guard people arrived. It was very, you know, it was exciting to see for somebody.

M: Yes, of course.

L: You know, I had no idea how fast they would get there. Because they had to drive up, of course, from Golden. So I of course asked the sheriff and who in an emergency has the chief jurisdiction, "What else did he need?" He said, you know, helicopters and food and blankets and stuff.

He didn't want me to mobilize any other people, which looked .... I was surprised, you know, but it turns out, he's absolutely right, he anticipated even then, that look, one of the problem he has is he doesn't need any more people just milling around, wanting to do good.

M: Right, right.

L: That what he really needed was helicopters to get people out of there, and to establish communications systems, so anyway, at no time after that was it ever even considered to mobilize more people. The 150 people that we had up there was even then, weren't fully utilized.

I'm glad we had them there, but in fact they performed some very .... we dropped some of those people in that night and the following day, into the Canyon; we had them congregate groups of people together, we had them in there
with emergency rations and everything else like that, but no more National
Guard people were at any time called for or needed.

M: But there was the equipment. Helicopters ... food, blankets, generators.

L: Yes. Now at this point I might tend to confuse two days, but, you know, those
are the things that I remember that soon became apparent, that we had a real
communications problem up in Estes Park.

M: Right.

L: And we had trouble getting in there, but we brought up
that, you know, we wanted to get in a big communications unit, and I didn't
even know we had one of these, but of course Chief Keith was there, and he
said, "Well, you know, there's one on the way already."

I think the state agencies just performed magnificently, frankly.
I'm just proud as hell of all of them. They just, I mean, I would say, "Hey,
how about this?" and they would quite often say, "It's already on the way."
I mean, really incredible.

M: Okay. Very soon, however, at least from the newspaper report, you must start
thinking about recovery efforts. That is, rebuilding efforts, which means
federal aid, state aid, emergency aid, and you do communicate with President
Ford, apparently very quickly. When do you start thinking about that sort of
thing, the sort of long-range recovery programs rather than the emergency
aid?

L: Well, let me, we, I guess, you know, I think I was back in Denver by 12:30
or something. I was back here for the ceremony.
The first phase of that recovery operation was clearly, you know, was going on
all right, so I came back to the big Hundred-Year, you know, the irony of this
thing, on our hundredth-year birthday.
But it didn't appear that there was anything else that I could do at that point. So came back here and participated in the various ceremonies we had that afternoon. And about the middle of the afternoon, I guess, the federal people, Don Eddy, I talked to him and I said, "You know, what do we do next?" And again, he'd been through a lot of these things.

And I really think that credit where credit is due, those people did a very good job, and they themselves initiated the letter to the President, the telegram.

Also, Congressman Jim Johnson was in here at about, you know, sometime in that afternoon, he talked to me, and said, "Well, I've been in touch with the White House, and they know what's going on, and they need a request from you.

That request was already in the works. Don Eddy had talked to our person, what's his name, oh, Logan Rappe, and at, by about six o'clock that evening, they had Logan Rappe and Don Eddy and one of his chief aides at the mansion with a letter and a telegram to the President, asking that he declare this a disaster area.

So I mean, again, everything working—government, one of the lessons the last couple of years, whether it's corrections or the Big Thompson Flood, is government works best in times of crisis. I mean, I wish government would be that expeditious all the time.

I asked, you know, after Jim Johnson's phone call, I'd get on the phone, and say, "What do we need to get the President?" and then they said, "We're typing it right now. We're going to be over at the Mansion at six o'clock." I mean, it's that kind of situation.
M: So you've got an unusual amount of cooperation?

L: Yes, and as I was saying that, a lot of times, the average reaction that I have is thinking that when I would find something was necessary, that other people would have already been working on it. I mean, that was very exciting to find.

M: Yes, it makes you feel like you've got a good staff.

L: Yes.

M: Well, did President Ford ever talk to you or respond to you or ...?

L: No, certainly not, not personally, but I don't blame him for that. I mean, he reacted by eight o'clock the following morning, we had this designated a disaster area, and he really did a good--his staff also did a good job.

You know, I think by eight o'clock the following morning, we were designated a disaster area. I went back up there that night. I, after my last obligation, I drove back up that night, and very, very again, impressed by ... they'd had that water conservancy building taken over by that time, there was a press room set up, there was an infirmary here, lots of the rescue groups were up there at that time, and the kitchen had been, the Red Cross was there, the Salvation Army was there, just good work.

M: So the rescue operation was running well.

L: Then the following morning, we had a council in here, and I'm sorry, but I'm really, now, at this point, I really get a little vague, those next two days and all, it was a state holiday.

But we had again, we had all of our senior aides brought in together, and I brought our highway people in, and basically at that point, the rescue effort was just simply going ahead. We went up, and I'm a little bit vague as to when this is, in one of those next two days, I think it was Monday, I went back up,
I went up on Tuesday.

Aide: The press conference that day. The meeting.

M: With all the local officials.

L: Yes, but was that? At one point I stopped, oh, I know, another aspect of this, I know when it was. On Sunday, I took another helicopter ride, you know; we took two. And I stopped at Estes Park, and met the undersheriff, up in charge of Estes Park, and that was, I had not been in contact with any people that had actually been involved, I mean, been in the Canyon, up to that point.

We stopped at the Stanley Hotel and our helicopter met the undersheriff, and at that point I met, first of all, a couple of young girls that I'll just never forget, whose parents had called them as they were starting up the Canyon at 7:30 the night before, and their parents were down in that, and they didn't know, you know, whether their parents were all right or not.

You know, it's not much I could tell them, there's not much we could do. But subsequently their parents wrote to me, thanking me for my concern, and you know, I didn't do anything, and they had been all right. They had found shelter someplace.

But the tragedy of that, of people who were involved and had loved ones down there and had themselves been in the Canyon became very apparent at the Stanley Hotel that morning.

Also, then, on that following, it also became apparent that there was not good communications between the Stanley, the Estes Park rescue group, and the Loveland rescue group. And those were two parts of the same coin, those were two legs of the same stool.

And so one of the things that we did was to get the State Patrol unit,
get the phone company to put in a special emergency number, because you couldn't
get the numbers up there, you know, you had to, we had bad communications prob­lems; even at Loveland.

Tuesday, then we went up there with a meeting of the local officials about
where we go from there, and coordinating the immediate finishing[f] the disaster
relief, and second of all, how we start the long-range recovery.

M: Okay. Long-range recovery has some difficult political questions involved in it.
For example, think about the business interests in, say, Estes Park. And Estes
Park was not touched, but they depend on tourist trade. And according to the
newspapers, you took a vacation there. Which may have helped them somewhat, I
don't know whether it did or not, but did you start hearing from these various
elements about the recovery and their special interests? Such as the business
people in Estes Park.

L: You know, Lee, honestly, Lee White from my staff was just spending his first
day with us. Or, you know, one of the first few days. I mean, it was, I don't
know, but it was, anyway, I guess, that's right, I guess you'd (to aide) been
here since, you'd been here for a couple of weeks, but that you're, anyway,
though, so it was a real, we had some senior staff people Lee White among
them, even though he had family arriving that very day of this whole thing, and
Marty[Martha] Tharp of my staff, were my eyes and ears up there, and they were
definitely in contact with the business people, and I did meet on that Tuesday,
we did talk to some of the business people at that time. They were concerned.
I mean, I don't think anybody, and the business people were very recognizing
of this, I mean, they wanted to make sure that everybody was safe, yet also,
there was not a big thing, but I felt that, for instance, nobody, I really
could not other than that guy that was trying to sell pictures of the flood, you
know, that I really feel that there was no ghoulish aspects of this thing. I don't have any unpleasant memories of somebody coming and saying, "Hey, how about my business?" when there's still people whose lives were in danger.

M: Let me throw out an argument for you on this. I think you could argue that if Estes Park missed its tourist season, you could have an economic disaster there. That's a disaster of a different dimension, maybe not loss of lives, but nonetheless, businesses would fail, the town would suffer, it is an economic disaster that--it could have happened.

L: Yes, and it could have been as worse as the actual property damage, it could be as much as ...yes. That was very much on my mind and, in fact, that's why we went, spent some time in Estes Park to show that Estes Park was alive and well.

M: You had not planned a vacation.

L: Yes, oh excuse me, by the way, I think in all fairness, I had planned a vacation. In fact, we had planned to go up to Estes Park, you know, that week, anyway. Yes, I think that's very important to say.

M: I think it is, too.

L: Yes, that we had ...I'd spent weekends up at Estes Park for a lot of years, my wife and I like to climb, we were already planning to take the kids, up there. And so we thought that it would be perfect just to combine the thing, I mean, to go up there, and I like to be anonymous on my vacations and go out in the mountains, and not, but we did then say, as long as I was going to be up there anyway, that what we ought to do is to try to emphasize that the worst thing that could happen would be for people to cancel their Estes Park reservations, and subject that area to two disasters.

M: Right.
L: When they'd already had one.

M: Okay, does your office, or do you play any role in the reestablishment of Highway 34? which is connected ....

L: Okay, you know, we did have, we got together with the Chamber of Commerce people, we had a big press conference, we tried to persuade people, even, we sent telegrams, we had the Federal Disaster Administration guy came in, Tom Dunne, and we asked him to have a press conference in Chicago, which he kindly did to show that Estes Park was still a great vacation spot. Set up a toll-free telephone line, we did a lot of those things, yes. I had a big press conference in the Chamber headquarters up there, which we did.

At the same time, of course, then, we had highway people already starting to look at "How do we, how do we get a pioneer road down in mainly for evacuation purposes?"

And I'd think a couple of other people here, our district engineer up there, Dwight Bower, really did a phenomenal job, also. And he was up, I'm sure, without much sleep for three or four days, just getting, to make sure that we could, Highway Department could, furnish all the assistance that they could. And even almost right away the Highway Department, Jack Kinstlinger of the Highway Department, started the estimations about "How much would it cost to rebuild the highway; where does it go; do you rebuild it in the same place?"

M: Okay, but does your office have to get involved in that decision?

L: Yes, all right, here you come into one of the most complicated aspects of this whole thing, because I think that again, just like the federal, the state statutes, put the local people, the Sheriff's Office in control of the actual disaster recovery and relief. But also the long-term recovery is mainly in the hands of the locals. That they have the zoning powers on the floodway;
they have the building permit authority; they have an awful lot, but we became aware that it had to be a synchronized relationship between the federal, state and local government.

And so, of course, I set up the Big Thompson Disaster Advisory Committee, so that we would make sure that all of these things were synchronized. And they all tie in, you know, the decision of the State as to whether to put the road back in the Canyon, would have a lot to do with the determination of the local government, to make sure that they have floodplain zoning, floodway zoning, to prevent anything from happening again. So, I mean, the whole thing has to move forward, together, and so we have, and still have operating, in fact, still playing a real role, is ....

M: It seems to become tremendously complex; you've got the road coming in; you've got the various ideas about a park; you've got the victims who want to recover somehow. There are all these questions about the amount of money, federal, local, some of it state money, but all of these are, all these are mixed in together, and it's tremendously complex. So what do you do as a Governor? You've appointed your advisory committee, now do you wait for recommendations? Do you give them a program of action? How do you handle that?

L: I think that you've got to set priorities. It's like any other, you know, ... first of all, one of the natural reactions is to rebuild right away, to get back. And there's going to be a lot of money spent in a fairly short order.

First, we urge the local people, and the local people, I will say, didn't need a lot of urging, because their mind was pretty much along the same way, to declare a moratorium. And in fact we had to make sure that we didn't put future people in jeopardy, that the decisions that were made right after the flood would not in fact set the stage for another disaster somewhere down the road. And so Lee White, again, of my staff, and other people, Works and Land
Commission, Jim Phelan [James L. Kurtz-Phelan], the attorney of the Land Use Commission, prepared the necessary papers, declaring a moratorium. At the request of the local county commissioners, I declared the moratorium. I gave them the implementing power.

M: You enabled them, at their request, to declare a moratorium.

L: Yes. I enabled them.

M: So they did that, so that they could take more time for future planning.

L: Yes, I think that again it's a balancing of interests, like other things, and of course the locals are under a lot of pressure from a lot of people who really want to get in there and rebuild, and I think that we certainly felt around this office that without seeming that that's a hardened attitude to people that did in fact suffer grievous economic loss, that we did have an overriding duty to make sure that other people weren't going to be put in that position in the future.

M: What about the economic loss? Guy's wiped out, retired, going on social security, put all his money into a house, it's washed down the river, and he doesn't have flood insurance. Does the state have an obligation in there?

L: I do not, well, think you have to, you know, again, people have come in this day and age to think about the government as being an insurer of all loss. I think that one of the, you know, our early pioneers, our forefathers, did not have any kind of government to make them whole again, whenever tragedy struck, and I think that that one of the hard, but realistic, facts of running the state government is that we do not have the assets to be the insurer of all personal loss, no matter what happens to people.

And so the federal government has had Section 408 programs, for instance, under the Federal Disaster Assistance Act, that there are, we want to, in fact, try to maximize the amount of help that these people can be given from
state, local, and mainly federal sources.

But that I think it would be a mistake and in fact, tried very hard from the very beginning not to get people's expectations up too high and then have them dashed. That's the last thing they want. I mean, a disaster is a disaster, and there is no way that I think that the state can be an insurer of all loss in the Canyon.

And I also feel the same way about the federal government. They can come closer, because they have a bigger resource base, but I think that again, what we want to do is make sure that we help fight to make sure that we're able to tap every possible program for relief.

M: Yes, it's kind of a sensitive area.

Aide: I think we'd better wrap it up pretty soon.

M: Okay, a few last questions in this. I know you're running on a tight schedule. I want to ask you about the significance of this. Can you foresee any long-range results? To give you some ideas--did the disaster have any impact on say, the structure of state government? Did it have any impact on the way you organize for emergency? Did it have any impact on, say, land use ideas? Or how to protect canyons in the future? That is, I'm asking for long-range effects of this disaster.

L: Yes, I would classify them in these orders. I mean, I think, number one is that I think that it did make a believer out of an awful lot of people in Colorado. And particularly an awful lot of local governmental officials, including the ones in that area. About the magnitude of possible disasters, living with the capriciousness of the weather in the West.

I mean, it's something that our forefathers learned, you know, this old story about locating Denver, or at that time, Auraria, too close to the
stream, and in violations of the Indian warnings, but I think that this is a lesson, unfortunately, that has to continue to be relearned.

And we do have a number of canyons in Colorado, a number of them, all of which, under the right meteorological conditions, could be subject to the same type of flood pattern. So I think that number one of its major effects, would be to make believers out of an awful lot of citizens and local governmental officials, that these things are real possibilities.

And even though twenty, you know, in twenty years or fifty years, they've never had a major flood, that they lurk perhaps around the next rainstorm. And number two is that I do believe that it's given floodplain zoning a real shot in the arm, both in the state and local level. It has certainly, again, and this is a correlation of the first point, it has certainly made people recognize that the government does have the right to, and the duty, in fact, to get in there and simply make sure that structures and people do not put themselves in unnecessary jeopardy. In terms of the overall disaster relief, I think it's heightened an awareness on the part of a lot of local government people, sheriff's offices, it's just lucky for those people up there that they had a well-organized, well-managed sheriff's office.

I think overall, that the state definitely learned something—we are not perfect, by any means. But I think that the, you know, I remain very proud of the state people. I mean, General Weller, Chief Keith, and all of the State Patrol that were up in that canyon, I just think that those people have a great thanks to an awful lot of people in that. I do not think it has made any major structural thing in how we handle and relate to disaster, because I think that the, aside for some bloopers, that the thing went fairly well.
M: Budget impact?

L: Yes, I think it's going to have a budget, I don't know how long-term that is, but I think that the legislature is going to have to decide that very tough public policy decision, to what extent does the State step in now and try to make people whole, and the second question, correlary to that one, is, do you pay if there is a loss, do you have it pre-flood loss, or post-flood loss? I mean, a terribly difficult policy question to answer.

M: Anything else you want to add to this?

L: Well, you know, again, one of the overriding lessons that just continues, and anybody that lives in the West has to recognize that for generations out here, that our forefathers recognized it, whether it's a sudden snowstorm or a sudden rainstorm or just hot drought or anything else like that, that there is in fact an unpredictable quality to nature that with a little bit of planning, you can, one has to recognize that, you know, like the early settlers, sometimes didn't, to their loss, but often did, you just can't, you know, you just can't build anyplace in Colorado. You just have to pay attention to some of your weather patterns and your potential for natural hazard, whether that's a snowslide, or a rainstorm.

M: Right. Thank you, Governor.

L: Okay.
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