

Level Design

Documentation:

“Water-Locked”



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2 Overview

There is no introductory cutscene to this level, instead the game picks up with the player waking up in a stasis chamber. Both the player and the character have little idea what's going on or where they are and this leads to exploration of the level in a "Metroidvania" style progression. The player is able to enter most rooms in the order of their choice, and recover keys/details leading to further rooms and areas which eventually lead them to a Train Key, which allows them to exit the level.

Since this level is more like a vertical slice of what would be a full game, the game flow in this level is more like the progression of an area of an otherwise far larger game world. The level itself is a part of a mysterious research facility built inside a Dam, with various different sections such as Labs, Offices, and Monitoring Rooms etc...

The player explores the different sections of the level, unlocking doors and activating equipment which slowly brings them through a disguised linear path. Along the way there are computers which can be used, which deliver fragments of back-story in the form of log-files. For example one computer implies that the administrator to the facility took the key to his office with him when he went into stasis, this informs the player where they can find the key. The exact level-flow is described later in this document.

Since this area is for the most part underground, the walls are generally concrete, and shaped in a concave manner in order to enforce a feeling of entrapment. Certain rooms have a different feel to them however; The Offices contain extremely high ceilings to give the sense that it is a more open space, while the labs have a suitably tiled texture. The architecture of individual rooms is better detailed later in this document.

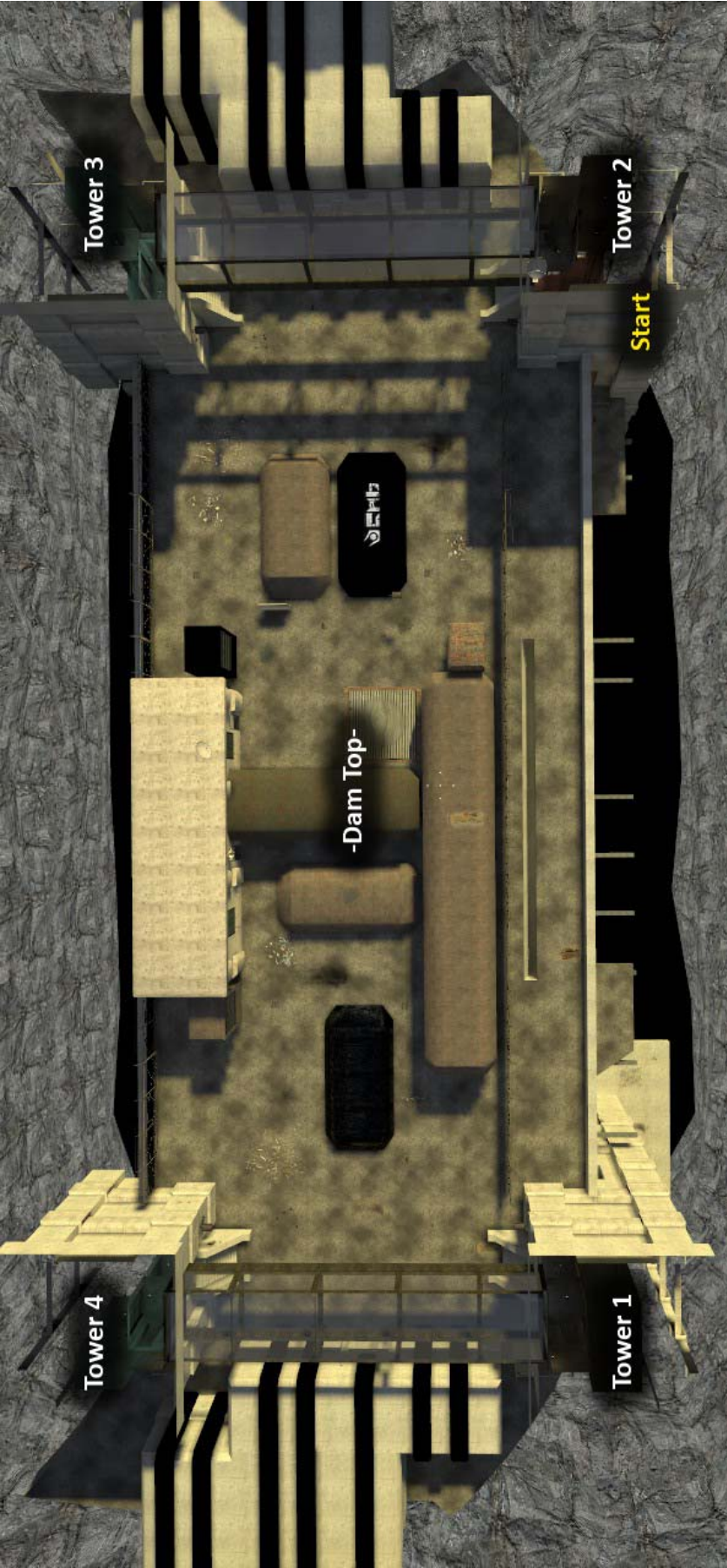
3 Further Details

- General setting: abandoned research facility.
- Ammunition and Health kits are relatively low on this level, causing the player to think more before they shoot.
- Weapons contained in this level: Crowbar, Pistol, Shotgun.
- Enemies contained in this level: Headcrabs, Zombies.
- Architectural Direction such as slanted ceilings, guided lighting is included throughout the map, in order to guide the player forward.
- Blue lighting has been used as a mood setter throughout most of the level.
- Objects of interest are pointed out to the player with the use of navigation hints (e.g.: the crowbar in the Storage Room is easy to notice). The entrance to each room also has a navigational text description above them.
- Upon entering each area, a text message appears onscreen letting the player build a mental map of the area.
- At well positioned points in the level, the game auto-saves.

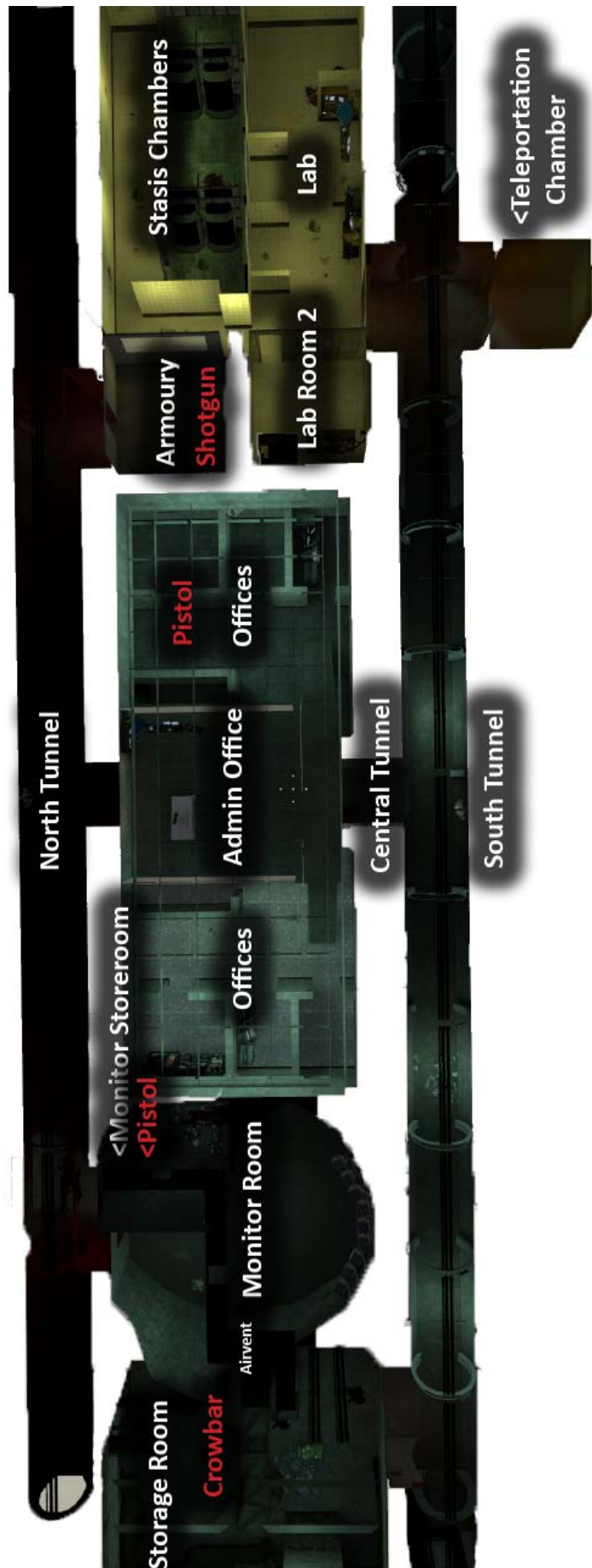
4 Maps

The maps of the different vertical levels of this level can be found in this section (Highest to lowest)

4.1 Dam Surface



4.2 Inside Dam



4.3 Train Station



4.4 Power Room (Lowest level)



5 Level Flow:

1. The level begins in a stasis chamber inside *Tower 2*, exit building through an exit on the side of the tower.
2. Access *Tower 1*, which is situated opposite *Tower 2* by jumping across a series of platforms, which fall as the player stands on them.
3. Enter *Tower 1*, lifts and doors will not function since the facility is not receiving any power
4. The only currently accessible path leads downstairs into an *underground train station*; a train here is visible behind a currently locked door which requires the "*Train Key*".
5. A ladder in the *train station* leads further downwards in the level to a *Power Room*.
6. A valve in the *power room* is currently stopping the flow of water, meaning that the facility cannot generate any power.
7. Releasing the *water valve* causes the power to return throughout the facility.
8. Back at *Tower 1*, a door leading to the *South Tunnel* is now unlocked as a result of the power being restored.
9. Upon first entering the *South Tunnel*, the lights turn on one by one, giving an impression of just how large this facility is.
10. The first room along the tunnel (*The Storage Room*) contains a *crowbar*, which can then be used to break open an air vent in the same room.
11. This air vent leads to the *Monitor Room*; the vent breaks in the *Monitor Room* and the door leading out is locked.
12. Using a door controls switch, the doors to the *Office* are then unlocked.
13. Inside a *secondary section* of the *Monitor Room* a corpse is found with a *Pistol*, and another part of the air vent falls to the floor.
14. A switch on the wall in this room unlocks the doors leading out of the monitoring room and back into the Tunnel, although now in the *North Tunnel*.
15. The automatic lighting system fails to engage in the *North Tunnel*, causing the use of the flashlight.
16. Arriving at the *Central Tunnel*, which connects the South and North Tunnels, a group of zombies attack from the darkness.
17. Upon entering the *Office*, the computers provide back-story leading the player to believe that there has been an evacuation of some kind. There is another section of the *Office* which has glass walls, it is the *Administrator's Office* and is currently locked.
18. The *Lab* (located at the end of the South Tunnel) contains computers detailing the whereabouts of the *Administrator's Office Key*.
19. Another Computer in the *Lab* causes the *Stasis Doors* to unlock, allowing access to the *Admin Office Key*, but also waking a group of Zombies from their stasis chambers.
20. In a *secondary room* located inside the *Lab*, the door to the *Armoury* can be unlocked.
21. The *Armoury* only contains a *Shotgun*, some *Med-packs* and *ammunition* – it is not a necessity to finish the level, but helps destroy enemies more easily (it can actually be picked up before the stasis chambers are unlocked).
22. Inside the now unlocked *Administrator's Office*, a log file on a computer mentions a *Teleportation Chamber*, hidden behind a holographic wall opposite the *Lab* entrance.
23. From the *Administrators Office*, the *Teleportation Chamber* is unlocked.
24. Entering the *Teleportation Chamber* immediately transports the player to a corridor in *Tower 3* (*Teleportation effects* appear during teleportation).
25. The still-working doors in *Tower 3* lead to the *top of the Dam*.

26. A barrage of Headcrab Canisters comes crashing down onto the Surface of the *Dam*.
27. The path forward across the *Dam* is made semi-apparent by the placement of birds placed like bread-crumbs leading to Tower 4, however before reaching there, the path is blocked and the player must use the upwards force of a fan system located on the ground in order to jump over the blockage and reach the tower.
28. The top of *Tower 4* leads to an over ground passing, connecting it to *Tower 1*. Along the passing, the Train Key can be found.
29. Now at the top of *Tower 1*, the lift can be used to reach the lowest floor more quickly.
30. Once the lift arrives, it contains a zombie for a quick scare.
31. The bottom of *Tower 1* leading to the *Train Station* is now occupied by zombies who must be either killed or avoided in order to reach the Train.
32. Upon unlocking the *Train door*, the level ends.

6 Individual Room descriptions:

6.1 Tower 2

Lighting:

Dim, dark orange – Since the facility is not receiving power at the moment, it is running on a backup a backup supply (standard blubs).

The correct route through the tower is made slightly more apparent by the placement of brighter lights leading the player outside.

Details:

Since the only purpose of this tower is to act as a way of setting up the platforming section between Towers 2 and 1 at the beginning of the level, most of this tower is inaccessible (explained by the fact that the doors and lift are not receiving power at the moment, and won't be until the player releases the Water Valve in the Power Room – despite the fact that this Tower is totally inaccessible after the beginning of the level as all doors leading to it are locked). For a more detailed description of the Towers, see the description of Tower 1 below. The top floor of the tower leading to the overpass between towers 2 and 3 is accessible at the start, to allow the player to get a better scope of the level's size at the beginning of the level, if they choose to take the top floor instead of the one leading to the platforming section – there is no further path or alternate route on the top floor, it is there for visual purposes only.

6.2 Dam Side

Lighting:

Skylight

Details:

This section acts as the route from Tower 2 to Tower 1, and contains a row of platforms high above the ground. As the player runs across the platforms they break and fall to the ground – the player therefore has to run across the route as quickly as they can while jumping from platform to platform. Initially the

player can see a small door located on the side of Tower 1 which they are running towards, however before they get there the platforms are guaranteed to fall from beneath them at the end of the platforming section, leading to the player falling down to a small raised platform around the lower entrance to Tower 1.

6.3 Tower 1

Lighting:

Primarily dim dark orange, then blue tinted – Before the power is returned, the entire Facility is running on a backup power supply, meaning that the only lights running are the backup bulb lights. Once power is restored the blue tinted tube lights are switched on.

Details:

Visually this Tower is bland, with a consistent grey concrete texture throughout. Some walls are decorated with pipes to give the area continuity with other rooms with pipes leading in this direction. Generally rooms are of standard height with ladders and a lift to connect them, numbering on the walls details the current floor the player is on. Until power is restored, only a few doors are open to the player (they are static in the open position), however once power returns to the facility all electric doors once again function. At the start of the level the player can only use this Tower to access the facility's tunnel system, however once the player has the Train Key required to leave this area, they are lead back to this Tower via the top entrance which had been locked from the other side previously.

6.4 Underground Train Station

Lighting

Dim orange (Power off, backup lights), blue tinted (Power on)

Details:

This section of the level is actually visited more than once by the player, during the first visit it acts as a means of getting to the Power Room via a ladder leading downwards to a tunnel and eventually the Power Room which is used to return power to the facility. When passing through this area though the player notices a train located on the opposite site of a fence, however when trying to access this train they are told the door leading to it has been locked and requires the Train Key – this lets the player know that this is a room they will be revisiting later. The first time the player walks through this area, the sound of a large impact can be heard which makes the screen shake – this gives the player the impression that they are not alone in this area, and that maybe someone knows they are awake from stasis. Once the player has the Train Key in their possession and unlocks the Train Door, the level ends.

The walls in this room are slanted inwards in order to make the area seem more cramped – while the wall opposite the entrance to the train line itself is slanted outwards creating the illusion of a more open space in those directions. The train line is a circular tunnel-like shape.

The colour choice for the train station area is grey concrete, although a different texture to the Towers, to allow for some differentiation.

6.5 Power Room

Lighting

Dim orange (Power off, backup lights), Blue tinted (power on)

Details:

As the player enters this room, they notice that it has a large amount of pipes all around the walls and ceilings and water can be seen in a lower section of the room – this should inform the player that water has some significance to this room. A large pipe can be seen leading down vertically into the water, and several other pipes leading to the water are blocked. By turning the water release valve the flow of water is returned causing the water in the room to rise higher, and the power returns to the facility within a few seconds at which point the tube lights switch on.

This room again uses a concrete textured appearance, with more murky decals applied to give a sense for how unmaintained it is. The ceiling curves around to the walls in a gradual slant, and there are various caps in the wall where pipes belong.

6.6 South Tunnel

Lighting:

At first this tunnel is pitch black, however once the player starts walking down the tunnel, blue tinted tube lights individually turn on one by one (although a few fail to turn on and instead spark and remain dark). This shows the player for the first time just how big this section of the facility is. The entrance doors to each of the rooms found in both the South and North Tunnels have red lights on either side, in order to make the entrances more visible to the player from a distance, without having to walk up and down the Tunnel checking for doors.

Details:

The Tunnels system is the main hub for this level, it allows access to the various different rooms located in the level, and is made up of the North, South and Central tunnels.

This tunnel contains entrances to the Storage Room, the Labs and the Teleportation Chamber, however the Teleportation Chamber is covered by a holographic wall (and locked) so the player doesn't know of its existence and cannot access it until they have disabled the lock to the door and read of the Chamber's location. The Storage Room and Labs are accessible from the start, although since it is located at the opposite end of the tunnel, the player is likely to leave this room until last.

All Tunnels are the same shape as the train tunnel – in an arch and contain pipes running all the way through them.

6.7 Storage Room

Lighting:

Blue tinted tube lights

Details:

This room contains a simple puzzle for the player to solve; an air vent can be seen up on the wall, however it is too high for the player to reach without either running and jumping from a higher elevation, or stacking boxes. The air vent requires the crow bar to open, which is located on top of a pile of crates – in order to reach this the player must follow a group of pipes to the top of the crates as a means of getting to that height. This room is the only way the player can reach the Monitoring Room (via the air vent), since the Monitoring Room is locked from the outside initially.

This room is filled with random junk; crates, storage boxes, lockers etc... As well as a random metal bars making it seem more believable as a storage room.

6.8 Monitoring Room

Lighting:

Blue tinted lights

Details:

The player actually enters this room via an air vent the first time, which breaks upon the player reaching a certain part of it. Upon trying to open the doors leading back into the Tunnels, the player finds them to be locked. The office can be seen on multiple monitors, situated underneath these monitors is a row of switches, releasing the switch currently in the “off” position unlocks the doors to the Office. In order to exit the monitoring Room to the North Tunnel, the player needs to use another switch, located in a smaller room attached to the Monitoring Room.

This room is built in a round semi-circular shape, with monitors on the wall around the semi circle pointing inwards to a row of tables; giving the impression that it was the job of some workers at the facility to monitor the goings on around the facility.

6.9 Monitoring Room (small connected room)

Lighting:

Initially off, although once the player enters the room a small white light flickers to life

Details:

This is a small storage room attached to the Monitoring Room, it contains a few sets of shelves containing generic objects and a switch on the wall (once pressed this unlocks the door leading back out to the North Tunnel from the Monitoring Room). As the player enters this room, a light is enabled and a hatch to the air vents above falls to the ground – this again gives the player the impression that they are not alone. A corpse can be found on the floor holding a pistol.

6.10 North Tunnel

Lighting:

This tunnel is pitched black other than the red lights next to accessible entrances. Part of the electrical systems on this Tunnel has been broken, although the reasoning behind making this tunnel dark is to allow the player to more easily realise where they since the Tunnels otherwise look very similar.

Details:

This Tunnel contains entrances to the Monitoring Room (locked from the inside) and the Armoury (initially locked). This tunnel is also connected to the South Tunnel via the Central Tunnel.

6.11 Central Tunnel

Lighting:

Dim Blue (red lights at the entrances to the Office)

Description:

The first time the player enters the Central Tunnel (from the North Tunnel) they trigger a group of zombies to spawn from an out of sight location; these zombies rush towards the player around the corner creating a quick jump-scare. This is the first enemy encounter in the level, since the tunnels are an open space; the player is free to run backwards while shooting at the zombies, destroying them at their own pace. The Central Tunnel contains 2 entrances to the Office, which vertically covers the Tunnel.

6.12 Office

Lighting:

Blue tinted

Description:

This room contains some of the back story to the level, accessible by using the various computers found around the room. There is a higher part of the office, located above the Central tunnel and accessed by a set of stairs; this leads to the Administrator's Office.

The computers in the office mention a variety of things: A mention of a mysterious evacuation procedure, an admission of guilt suggesting that Teleportation technology is somehow responsible for what has happened to the facility, and a log explaining that the staff who remained chose to use the stasis facilities (suggesting to the player that they were one of the staff too, and entered stasis for that reason).

The office is contains a more clean white appearance, with a plastic ceiling commonly found in offices, also the ceilings are very high to make the space seem more open. There are different cubicles in the office, separated by low divider walls. Most cubicles contain a computer which can be checked.

6.13 Labs

Lighting:

Bright yellow

Details:

This room contains two computers, one of which contains a log entry detailing that the Administrators Office Key is still with the Administrator (who has entered stasis). The player must then use the second computer to deactivate the stasis chambers which can be seen through multiple windows in this room (and is accessible from this room too). Ending the stasis cycle however releases dead bodies and zombies from the stasis chambers (indicating that the human staff that entered stasis may have been infected with something, which they either didn't realise or tried to slow). Until all the zombies are killed, the exit from the room is locked and a siren continues to sound – this forces the player to investigate the stasis chambers; leading them to the Administrator's Key.

This room is contains tiled walls and floors since it is a lab. Windows can be found showing the different stasis chambers, another window on a wall of the lab shows the Armoury (containing shotguns) – the player may notice this, and attempt to gain access to the Armoury (via the North Tunnel) by using the computer in a small room attached to the Labs which unlocks the Armoury door. The stasis chambers release smoke once they are opened.

6.14 Armoury

The Armoury is a small square shaped room filled with lockers containing Shotguns and ammunition – useful for destroying the zombies with more ease. This room is part of a non-essential detour through the level.

6.15 Administrators Office

Lighting:

Orange (although since the walls in this office are made of glass, light from the surrounding offices is also present)

Details:

This office is locked at first and requires the Administrators Office Key (found in one of the stasis chambers in the lab). Two Computers can be found in the office, one contains a log file detailing how the administrator was aware that the teleportation technology is not precise or exact, the other computer details that there is actually a Teleportation Chamber hidden behind a holographic wall opposite the Lab entrance – the door to this Chamber is then unlocked via this computer.

The props found in this room are more expensive compared to the rest of the offices, indicating the importance of the occupier. The walls are also made out of glass, allowing the player to see downwards into the offices below.

6.16 Teleportation Chamber

Details:

This room is simply a brightly textured room which automatically pulls the player inside once they open the door, at which point they are teleported to Tower 3.

6.17 Teleportation Effects Room

Details:

This room is where the player is temporarily teleported to; it exists simply to show the teleportation effects before the player appears in Tower 3.

6.18 Tower 3

Lighting:

Same as other towers, lighting guides the player outside onto the Dam Top

Details:

The player is teleported into a corridor in this tower (implying the inaccuracy and unpredictability of the teleportation system). All doors and except the ones leading to the top of the Dam do not function (and the stairs are blocked by hatches stopping the player from going away from the intended path – and to avoid unnecessary repetition in the level, since there are 4 identical towers).

6.19 Dam Top

Lighting:

Mid-day sun

Details:

As soon as the player steps out of Tower 3 onto the Dam surface, a barrage of head crab canisters fall from the sky and impact the ground – the player can either destroy each head crab or ignore them and run forwards. Birds have been positioned along the path through this area though; leading to Tower 4 (the other tower entrances are locked). In order to pass a container blocking the path part way along the Dam, the player must run and jump onto the airstream a fan in the ground is pushing up – this provides a vertical boost needed to reach the other side of the container.

The different towers have numbers to identify them, and the area is made to seem more believable by having large buildings at either end of the dam (which are not accessible), fan systems can be found along the dam surface, as well as large containers. The outer skybox of the area contains a surrounding set of mountains and water, and the level takes place in full daylight.

6.20 Tower 4

Lighting:

Same as other towers

Details:

This tower acts as a route back into Tower 1, the player enters this tower via the Dam surface entrance, then follows the stairs (all other doors and exits are blocked) to the overpass back to Tower 1. The overpass is made of thick glass allowing the player to see outside, and contains the Train Key required to exit the level.