

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
HAZARDOUS WASTE STAGING FACILITY
PANTEX PLANT, AMARILLO, TEXAS

Agency: Department of Energy (DOE)

Action: Finding of No Significant Impact

Proposed Action: Existing waste staging areas at DOE's Pantex Plant, located in Amarillo, Texas, are currently at or near capacity. Additional space is required for the staging of contaminated waste, especially in light of the expected acceleration of nuclear weapons retirement schedules. The proposed facility would help to alleviate capacity problems as well as provide a single facility to stage wastes at Pantex that is in compliance with applicable regulations.

The proposed action involves the construction and operation of a 13,900 gross square foot (excluding mechanical room and loading dock) pre-engineered metal building that would provide Resource Conservation and Recovery Act-compliant warehouse space for the staging of hazardous waste, mixed waste, low level radioactive waste (e.g., rags, gloves, paper towels), and non-radioactive waste (e.g., waste metal components, contaminated soil, and asbestos waste). The proposed Hazardous Waste Staging Facility (HWSF) would be designed to capture any spills or leaks that may develop, including separate spill containment provisions for incompatible wastes or chemicals, and to provide sufficient aisle space to permit inspection of the contents.

For further project information or a copy of the environmental assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-0688), contact:

Vicki C. Battley, Environment, Safety and Health Management Branch, Amarillo Area Office, U.S. Department of Energy, Amarillo, Texas 79120, telephone (806) 477-3189.

For further information about the DOE NEPA process, contact:

Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Oversight, Office of Environment, Safety and Health, U.S. Department of Energy, Washington D.C. 20585, telephone (202) 586-4600 or (800) 472-2756.

Environmental Impacts: Threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat, historical or cultural resources, wetlands, floodplains, and other sensitive environmental resources would not be affected by the proposed project. Some temporary airborne particulate matter (i.e., soil) would be generated during scarifying and earth moving operations at the building site and the borrow pit. The solid waste (less than 50 cubic yards) would be excess soil and materials generated during the construction phase of the activity. These wastes would be inspected by the Environmental Protection Department personnel of Battelle Pantex before being placed in the construction landfill. No hazardous waste, mixed waste, low level radioactive waste, waste metal, contaminated soil, or asbestos waste would be generated by the construction or operation of this facility. There would be no discharge of liquid effluents from the proposed HWSF into off-site surface waters. (All liquid effluents would be routed to retention basins within the site boundary.)

Radiation doses for workers under normal operations (i.e., with enclosed drums) would be kept within the Plant standard of 1 rem per year from all sources. A radioactive waste spill or fire in the HWSF would require workers to take protective action to prevent potential exposure to harmful chemicals or radiation levels in excess of the Plant standard. However, the worker radiation levels would be less than the DOE worker limit of 5 rem per year, even without protective equipment, and the off-site impacts of each of these accidents would be very small (dose for off-site receptor would be less than 5×10^{-2} mrem/year).

Based on the analyses in the EA, there would be no cumulative effects of the proposed action and past actions (e.g., the High Explosive Machining Facility, approximately 2,800 feet from the proposed HWSF) or present actions (e.g., land uses in the vicinity of the proposed action).

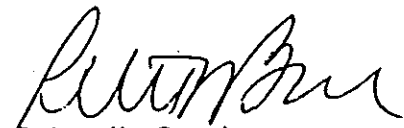
Alternatives Considered: DOE considered six alternatives to the proposed action as follows:

- (1) No action. This alternative was rejected because it does not fully comply with EPA and RCRA regulations.
- (2) Redesign and Modify Existing Staging Facilities. This alternative was rejected because modification of all the existing staging areas to bring them into compliance with EPA regulations would not be cost-effective.
- (3) Use Other Existing Facilities at Pantex Plant. This alternative was rejected because there are no other existing facilities available for the staging of contaminated waste.

- (4) Use Temporary Structures. This alternative was rejected because of excessive cost, in addition to not effectively satisfying the need for waste staging.
- (5) Stage Waste at Other Sites. This alternative was rejected because all other DOE sites are experiencing the same waste staging problems.
- (6) Stage Wastes Separately. This alternative was rejected because it is more efficient to consolidate waste operations. Modifications to existing facilities or new construction of several facilities would be required, thus significantly increasing the cost.

Determination: Based on the information contained in the EA, the construction and operation of the HWSF would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §4321 et seq. Therefore, the Department is issuing this finding of no significant impact and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Issued in Washington, D.C., on January 29, 1993.



Peter N. Brush
Acting Assistant Secretary
Environment, Safety and Health