

U.S. Department of Energy
Finding of No Significant Impact
Center for Advanced Industrial Processes
Washington State University

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

SUMMARY: The Department of Energy has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA-1055) evaluating the construction, equipping and operation of the proposed Center for Advanced Industrial Processes (CAIP) at Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman, Washington.

Based on the analysis in the EA, the DOE has determined that the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION:

House Report 102-866 accompanying the FY 1993 Energy and Water Appropriations Act recommended that \$8,000,000 in the DOE appropriation be provided to assist Washington State University with construction of the proposed Center for Advanced Industrial Processes (CAIP). The project involves demolition of several obsolete facilities, as well as construction and operation of the proposed CAIP. The proposed CAIP will consist of a three-story building of 82,000 gross square feet containing laboratories, classrooms, seminar rooms, and graduate student and administrative office space. A grant was executed with the University on May 26, 1993, and grant funds are available for the limited purpose of performing preliminary studies, including analysis necessary to conduct an environmental assessment. However, under the terms of the grant, the University may not initiate construction or take any other action which would affect the environment or limit alternatives until a determination has been made by DOE that the action should proceed.

ALTERNATIVES:

Under the no action alternative, DOE would not authorize the University to proceed with proposed demolition and construction or with any other action on the project that would affect the environment or limit alternatives. A no-action alternative would require scaling back the currently planned project by approximately 30% or delaying the project until another source of funding could be found. Delaying the project due to no-action (which would also delay demolition of the existing buildings since they house critical academic programs), would result in a postponement of the beneficial and adverse environmental, safety and health, and programmatic effects reported in the Environmental Assessment. The alternative - scaling down the size of the planned facility - would not reduce the magnitude of demolition and construction impacts, and would likely reduce operational impacts less than 30% of the estimates in Chapter 5 of the Environmental Assessment, since scaling back of instruction and research is not anticipated to affect enrollment growth. However, scaling back would likely have a negative impact on laboratory instruction, which would have to be altered due to pressure on laboratories from increased student enrollment. In addition, students with severe handicaps could not be admitted to certain programs. Laboratory experiments would suffer significantly and not reflect modern engineering practice.

The University is committed to implementing the project without the DOE grant and thus, the environmental impacts of the no-action alternative would be consistent with those of the proposed action.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

Areas of potential impact evaluated in the EA included those associated with both the construction and operation of the facility.

Construction impacts evaluated included the effects of demolition of existing buildings, erosion, construction waste disposal, air emissions, noise, and construction traffic and parking.

Operations impacts evaluated included the effects of waste generation (domestic, sanitary, hazardous, medical/biological, radioactive) radiation exposures, air emissions (criteria, air toxics and radioactive), noise, socioeconomic impacts, accidents, and other direct, indirect and cumulative long term impacts.

No significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed construction or operations are anticipated. This finding of no significant impact for the proposed action is based on the following factors which are supported by information and analysis in the EA.

Impacts of Demolition/Construction/Installation

No sensitive resources (historical/archeological, protected species/critical habitats, wetlands/floodplains, national forests/parks/trails, prime farmland and special sources of water), would be affected by the project as they do not occur on or near the proposed site. Routine construction waste would be managed according to appropriate State and local regulations. Air quality impacts would be associated with delivery trucks and on-site construction machinery, and would be low level and transient. Noise levels would be those conventionally associated with daytime construction activities for a low-rise building and are not likely to disturb residences, students or outdoor recreation. Construction traffic would not significantly affect local circulation or parking.

Impacts of Operations

Waste Generation: No net increases in domestic or sanitary waste are expected because existing activities would be relocated to the new facility. Domestic and sanitary wastes would meet local requirements and can be readily accommodated by existing municipal services. Hazardous wastes would total approximately 200 gallons per year consisting of mineral acids, caustic agents, flammable solvents, halogenated solvents, aqueous organics, aqueous heavy metals, spent motor oil, surplus old chemicals, and other miscellaneous waste. These would be collected by licensed contractors for permitted disposal. These would be managed in accordance with the University's Department of Environmental Health and Safety existing hazardous waste management program.

Radiation Exposure: Radiation exposures as may be associated with use of a laboratory electronic balancing device employing a Polonium-210 source would be below badge detection limits and negligible.

Air Quality: Toxic air emissions would consist of laboratory ventilation system blowout to the air of some fraction of the liquid hazardous wastes listed above, depending on volatility. Routine use of materials listed would not result in significant levels of public exposure as listed in threshold limit values defined by the American Council of Government Industrial Hygienists. The project would generate no new criteria pollutants because demands on the University's central boiler system from the new facility would be offset by the reduced demand of the demolished buildings. The project would generate no radioactive emissions.

Other Effects: Noise generated indoors or outdoors would be insignificant. Socioeconomic impacts would be small in the scale of overall university economic activity. Accident risk would be very low based on the fact that the operations are ongoing. Experience over the last five years has shown only minor spills have been reported none which have caused death or serious injury to personnel or have resulted in permanent or large scale environmental damage. There have been no fires or explosions from laboratory operations which have caused death or injury. Overall, the incremental impacts of the project are small in relation to the ongoing impact of the University, and do not constitute significant cumulative impacts.

TERMINATION:

Based on the analysis in the EA, the DOE has determined that the proposed Center for Advanced Industrial Processes at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington does not constitute a major Federal Action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement on the Proposed Action is not required.

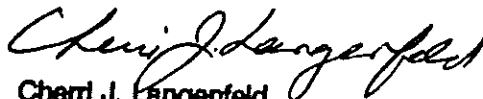
PUBLIC AVAILABILITY: Copies of this EA are available from:

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