

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
CONSTRUCTION OF A CHILDCARE FACILITY**

**AGENCY:** U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)

**ACTION:** Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

**SUMMARY:** The DOE has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA), DOE/EA-1445, to analyze the potential environmental consequences of a facility construction effort at the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, campus of the National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL). Within the existing NETL site, the DOE would construct a 1-story, approximately 8,600 ft<sup>2</sup> building to provide childcare housing for a maximum of 90 children.

Based on the analysis in the EA, the DOE has determined that the proposed action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, 42 United States Code 4321 *et seq.* Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and DOE is issuing this FONSI.

**COPIES OF THE EA ARE AVAILABLE FROM:**

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**BACKGROUND:** As part of its mission, the NETL provides science, technology, and policy options to resolve environmental, supply, and reliability issues associated with the use of fossil energy. Consistent with this mission and in partnership with stakeholders, the NETL supports efforts by industry to increase energy efficiency, minimize wastes, reduce environmental impacts, and increase the availability of domestic energy supplies through productivity and operational enhancements.

To achieve this mission, the NETL employs a Federal staff of scientists, engineers, management and business specialists, and administrative personnel that is supported by on-site contractor employees. At the Pittsburgh campus, approximately 510 employees work to achieve the NETL mission. The NETL's Pittsburgh campus is located at a Federal site (the Bruceton Research

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Center) that also includes employees of the Mine Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, resulting in a cumulative Federal and contractor workforce of over 1,000 employees. On-site childcare does not currently exist at the Bruceton Research Center.

The NETL is proposing to construct a 1-story, approximately 8,600 ft<sup>2</sup> building to provide a childcare facility for NETL employees. The construction of a childcare building and facility was considered in relation to increased concerns over public safety and physical security measures, including increased physical security for NETL's laboratory complex and increased safety measures for persons that would use the childcare facility. The NETL proposes to construct the facility within reasonable proximity to NETL buildings, to ensure an appropriate degree of convenience for employees using the childcare facility, while maintaining a safe distance from primary work areas.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION:** The proposed childcare building and facility would be constructed on a vacant, 2.1-acre DOE property bordering Wallace Road in South Park Township, Pennsylvania. In addition to the main building, the facility would also include an adjoining 8,500 ft<sup>2</sup> playground, and a 24,000 ft<sup>2</sup> parking area and driveway for drop-off and pick-up of children. The entrance to the parking area would connect directly to Wallace Road but would be separate from entrances to the NETL's main buildings. The childcare facility would potentially accommodate 90 children between the ages of 6 weeks to 12 years (including the "After-School Program"). The entire facility would be bounded by a security fence and would occupy an area of approximately 51,400 ft<sup>2</sup>.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES:** The EA identified that the most notable changes from the proposed action would occur in the following areas: aesthetics and land use, wetlands, vehicular traffic, and construction-related impacts resulting from traffic, equipment emissions, fugitive dust, noise, and surface water runoff. However, no significant adverse impacts or environmental concerns were identified by analyzing the planned construction and operation of the proposed facilities.

*Aesthetics and Land Use:* The proposed project site is an undeveloped, but previously disturbed, grassy land area. All adjacent properties are part of NETL, including the "900 area" cluster of buildings and Wallace Road. The proposed visual changes would be designed to be aesthetically pleasing and to provide a positive improvement to the land area. No impacts on parks, recreation areas, contiguous residential neighborhoods, or scenic views would result from implementing the proposed action.

*Wetlands:* One palustrine emergent wetland has been identified and delineated within the project area. The total wetland area at the project site is 0.001 hectare (0.002 acres); it received a high rating for groundwater discharge. However, construction of the proposed facility would not affect the identified palustrine wetland.

*Vehicular Traffic:* Local roads and streets near the proposed project area would experience an increase in traffic during construction activities. This increase would be of short duration, occurring when construction workers, material deliveries, and equipment arrive and depart from

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the site. Construction activities would not obstruct Wallace Road, other than to make connections to utilities. Upon completing the construction work, a minor increase in traffic would result from childcare employees and volunteer workers. Since use of the childcare facility would be limited to site employees, an overall increase with respect to patronage on Wallace Road would not occur. Employees would use current routes to access the facility, which would not result in either an increase of traffic or an adverse effect on local traffic patterns and neighboring streets. The only substantive change in current traffic patterns would result from drop-off and pick-up of children using the childcare facility. This change would have minimal effect on the low-level of traffic flow on Wallace Road.

*Construction-Related Impacts:* Construction of the proposed facility would have both negative and positive, short-duration impacts. Negative impacts would be typical of construction activities, i.e., impacts to air quality, noise, dust, and traffic (see Vehicular Traffic). Air quality in the immediate vicinity of the construction activities would be temporarily impacted by equipment engine emissions and dust resulting from excavation and construction activities. Water sprays would be used to reduce airborne dust from construction work. Noise and vibrations would increase due to earth-moving, pile driving, heavy equipment movement, and various construction activities. Operable mufflers would be required on all heavy-equipment engines.

Positive impacts would include temporary increases in both construction jobs and in local sales of construction materials and support services. These temporary conditions would cease following completion of facility construction, and none of the temporary conditions would be anticipated to result in any significant environmental effects.

*Surface Water Runoff:* Erosion of soil and increased surface water runoff would be controlled according to an Erosion & Sedimentation Control Plan. Control provisions would consist of surrounding the existing catch basins with a geo-textile fence to filter site-borne stormwater before it enters the stormwater system and grading the site to a level configuration. The site grading would involve extending an existing hillside vertically and adding a series of hay bales along the base of the existing slope to filter stormwater runoff before collection in nearby catch basins. Following the site grading, the hillside extension and playground area would be hydroseeded and a sub-base of paved areas would be placed to handle construction traffic.

NETL's existing site stormwater discharge permit would be applicable to this project. Unpaved work roads would be gravel armored. The length of time that unprotected soil would be exposed would be limited according to terms specified in the construction contracts.

**ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED:** In addition to the proposed action, the DOE has considered the No-Action Alternative, whereby the NETL would continue to operate without an on-site childcare facility. Under this Alternative, employees requiring childcare services would be constrained by the proximity to their homes of available childcare service providers; opportunities to reduce the commuting times of employees would not be realized. Typically, childcare providers do not offer the advantages of extra security protection that would naturally be realized from a childcare facility located within the boundaries of a government site. In addition, the increased distance of separation from children in off-site childcare facilities could increase the parent's normal concerns and add inconvenience in case of a parent's need for prompt access. Therefore,

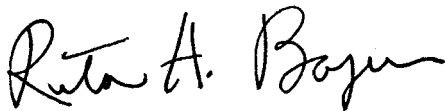
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primarily for reasons of workplace efficiency, convenience, reduction in commuting time and expense, and security, the DOE's preferred alternative is to build an on-site, childcare facility.

**PUBLIC AVAILABILITY:** Public Notices announcing availability of the Draft EA were published in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, which serves the greater Pittsburgh and surrounding areas, and the *Park News*, which is the principal newspaper serving South Park Township and the surrounding communities. The Draft EA was posted on the NETL website on August 26, 2002. On August 27, copies of the Draft EA were provided to the Pleasant Hills Borough Library in Pleasant Hills, Pennsylvania, and the South Park Community Library in South Park, Pennsylvania, for review and comment by the public; copies were also made available for review at the Pittsburgh campus of the NETL. By the close of the comment period on September 18, 2002, no comments were received.

**DETERMINATION:** Based on the information and analyses in the EA, the DOE has determined that the proposed Federal action, to construct a childcare facility, does not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and the DOE is issuing this FONSI.

Issued in Pittsburgh, PA, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2002.



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