FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

EXPANSION OF THE VOLPENTEST
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MANAGEMENT AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE
TRAINING AND EDUCATION CENTER

HANFORD SITE, RICHLAND, WASHINGTON

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

November 2002

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AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA), DOE/EA-1412, for expanding training and equipment testing facilities at the Volpentest Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response Training and Education Center (HAMMER) on the Hanford Site, Richland, Washington. Based on the analysis in the EA, and considering tribal and agency comments, 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 of 1969* (NEPA). Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

ADDRESSES AND FURTHER INFORMATION:

Single copies of the EA and further information about the proposed action is available from:

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PURPOSE AND NEED: The U.S. Department of Energy needs to provide additional cost-effective personal protection and public safety through expanding training and equipment testing facilities at the Volpentest Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response Training and Education Center (HAMMER) on the Hanford Site.

BACKGROUND: Currently HAMMER, which began operation in September 1997, provides training for both radioactive and chemical hazardous response, firefighting, law enforcement, and occupational, safety, and health training. The mission for HAMMER is to host, broker, and provide training with its partners, involving the hands-on use of realistic props and settings to save lives and reduce injuries, increase personnel productivity, and serve as a catalyst for a regional training industry.

HAMMER began as a local community initiative based on the concept that one training center could serve both the Hanford Site and the region. From that beginning, HAMMER has grown to a national training resource and is well known for its unique partnering approach, its training facility, and its realistic props and simulations.

The original HAMMER was completed in June 1997 on 80 acres (32.3 hectares) of the original 120-acre (48.6-hectares) site. The remaining 40 acres (16.2 hectares) were reserved for future expansion. The existing 10,000-acre (4,047-hectare) Hanford Patrol Academy located immediately north of HAMMER was merged into HAMMER in September 1998. That portion was rededicated as the Law Enforcement and Security Training Center (LESTC). HAMMER operates LESTC in conjunction with the Hanford Patrol. LESTC also is available for use by outside agencies for training purposes. LESTC encompasses approximately 10,000 acres (4,047 hectares), which includes the current firing ranges and safety zones.

HAMMER currently consists of an administration and classroom building, burn house with computerized burn system, training support building, a number of large training pads for craft-specific and fire training, stream and pond, training tower, aboveground pipelines, various transportation props, a remediation/characterization site, confined space prop, simulated buried waste site, and a junction/diversion box with simulated underground waste tank prop.

Emergency Vehicle Operations Course

The Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) had been located on Port of Benton land at the old bus parking lot located north of the 1163 Building (the warehouse located at 2355 Stevens.) Recently, this space was leased to a commercial company. EVOC has suspended operations pending availability of a new site.

National Utility Training Services Site

The Northwest Public Power Association (NWPPA) is a non-profit association that has created partnerships with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and approximately 200 public utilities, including four local public utilities [Benton Public Utility District (PUD), Franklin PUD, City of Richland, and Douglas PUD], for the purpose of providing education and training services for utility personnel throughout the western United States. The goal of NWPPA is to establish National Utility Training Services (NUTS) as a state-of-the-art training facility to provide hands-on training without jeopardizing power reliability or endangering personnel and equipment.

The NUTS site consists of 80 acres (32.4 hectares) for use in connection with training equipment. Ownership of this 80 acres (32.4 hectares) is being transferred to the NWPPA. In addition, DOE-RL has granted an easement for road and utility access across an approximate 4-acre (1.6-hectare) parcel of land immediately south and between the property and Horn Rapids Road. This easement has been covered by other *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) *of 1969* documentation.

Cold Test Facility

The newly constructed Cold Test Facility (CTF) adjacent to HAMMER provides a test bed for full-scale testing of tank waste retrieval, transfer, and sampling hardware to be procured by the Single-Shell Tank Closure Project and the Double-Shell Tank Waste Delivery Project. The construction and operation of CTF has been evaluated under separate NEPA documentation. Potential impacts of habitat mitigation for CTF are discussed in this EA for completeness.

PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action includes constructing and operating the EVOC, which would be located on approximately 60 acres (24.2 hectares); expanding, operating, and transferring ownership of NUTS, which is located on approximately 80 acres (32.3 hectares) [40 acres (16.2 hectares) from the original HAMMER footprint and 40 additional acres (16.2 hectares) from the expansion]; and reserving the remaining space [approximately 92 acres (37.2 hectares)] north of the original HAMMER, NUTS, and the CTF and south of the BPA power lines for future development. EVOC would provide training to emergency service personnel when driving in emergency response situations. NUTS would provide training for utility personnel.

Emergency Vehicle Operations Course

EVOC would be located on the approximate 60-acre (24.2-hectare) section to the west of Ila Lane and north of Horn Rapids Road. EVOC would consist of an asphalt course approximately 36 feet (11 meters) wide and 1 mile (1.6 kilometer) long. The course would include a quarter mile (0.4 kilometer) straightaway, a 180-degree corner, and a serpentine of several more turns of varying degrees and radii. The straightaway would be level while the rest of the course would follow approximately the natural elevations of the land. In addition to the asphalt course, a 160,000 square foot (14,864 square meter) asphalt pad would be constructed as a skills course for low speed vehicle maneuvers. A parking area, connex box pad, and shelter area pad also would be constructed at the entrance to the course. The parking area would be approximately 12,500 square feet (1,161 square meter), and the connex box and shelter area pads would be approximately 1,500 square feet (139 square meters) and 600 square feet (55.7 square meters) respectively.

National Utility Training Services Site

Title to the 80 acres (32.3 hectares) NUTS site would be transferred to the NWPPA. The NUTS site would have properly positioned spans of both wooden and steel transmission lines with room for erecting and dismantling. An area would be used for a helipad, a parking garage for equipment, and an area for earthmoving training.

Areas Reserved for Future Development

Approximately 92 acres (37.2 hectares) are reserved for future development and would be addressed under a future NEPA review once plans have been developed. These areas are located to the north of the original HAMMER and to the north of the CTF and south of the BPA power lines.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: No-Action: The no action alternative would mean that the EVOC would not be built at HAMMER; the NUTS site would not be expanded beyond the current size of 40 acres (16.2 hectares). These areas would remain undeveloped and not specified for future expansion.

Alternatives to Locating EVOC and NUTS: Relocation of the EVOC to another location off the Hanford Site was considered.

Use of existing training facilities or other locations for the NUTS Facility was considered including a training facility at Camp Rilea near Astoria, OR. The primary use of Camp Rilea is as a National Guard Camp and utility training is considered a secondary use. Available land near the I-5 corridor was also considered, as was land near the HAMMER Facility that is zoned for an industrial park.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

No adverse impacts to cultural or historic properties are expected. Intermittent monitoring by an archaeologist would to ensure that potential historic properties are not impacted by project activities.

Small quantities of gaseous, particulate, or thermal discharges from typical construction activities, such as trucks for transporting building materials and solid waste, heat and exhaust fumes from construction equipment motors, or backfilling, could be generated for short periods of time during the construction phase for each site of the proposed action. Watering down soil would control dust emissions.

During routine operations of the proposed action, small quantities of gaseous, particulate, or thermal discharges from such activities as the motor vehicles on the EVOC course or vehicles/machines involved in activities at NUTS would be generated. Small quantities of emissions could occur at the CTF from the simulants as various types of mixing equipment are tested. Small amounts of emissions would occur from vehicles arriving and leaving EVOC, NUTS, and CTF. The CTF has a design life of 30 years. It is expected that the design life of NUTS and EVOC also would be approximately 30 years. Eventual decommissioning and dismantlement of EVOC, NUTS, and CTF would comply with applicable regulations and procedures in effect at that time. The impacts of the operations and post-operations of the proposed action are considered to be relatively minor. No substantial increases in the overall emissions are envisioned from the proposed action.

Ecological Impacts: Development of the EVOC and NUTS would disturb previously undisturbed soil. The relatively high diversity of forbs and residual sprouting of bitterbrush following the June 2000 Command 24 fire will be impacted by construction activities and surviving sagebrush “islands” may be impacted. These impacts would be mitigated by revegetation with native species as described in the Mitigation Action Plan (Appendix C of the EA).

A burrowing owl was located on the EVOC site. To mitigate potential impacts on the burrowing owlz , the EVOC entrance, parking lot, and two pads were moved south during design to avoid impacting the nest site, and artificial burrows will be placed per the Mitigation Action Plan. To avoid potential impacts on migratory birds such as loggerhead shrikes, if construction has not been completed by March 15, 2003, a biological survey would be conducted and bird avoidance measures would be in place to reduce the likelihood of an 'unlawful take' of migratory birds as much as reasonably as possible. As practicable, construction activities would not occur during nesting season.

Safety Impacts: No significant impacts are expected. It is not expected that there would be any radioactive or hazardous substances present during construction and only small amounts of potential hazardous waste (e.g., waste oil and/or cleaning agents) would be expected to be generated during operations.

Accident consequences were considered for the proposed action.

Construction Phase. The reasonably foreseeable accidents during construction would be typical construction accidents. Nonradiological risks to personnel from occupational illness or injury are based on statistics for DOE and DOE contractor experience. The lost workday rate is 63 per 200,000 hours of construction work. The fatality rate is close to zero per 200,000 hours of work. About 2 lost workdays and no fatalities would be expected during the construction phases. All construction personnel for DOE projects would follow approved DOE safety procedures for construction activities. All construction personnel for NUTS would follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 1910.267 standards. Typical construction hazards would exist; however, the risk of severe accidents would be

small.

Operational Phase

EVOC. Reasonably foreseeable accidents during operation would be vehicle collisions or single vehicle accidents that would occur while training on the course. Potential vehicle accidents are remote since there would be individual runs of vehicles. Possible fires from catalytic converters might occur. In either case, a local fire or police agency would be notified. The soft sand surrounding the EVOC would prevent errant vehicles from the course from entering Horn Rapids Road to the south or Ila Lane to the east of the EVOC. Physical barriers would be added as necessary.

NUTS. The Northwest Line Joint Apprentice Training Committee operates a training school on the Oregon coast that consists of steel towers, wood towers with transmission lines, a pole yard, and an indoor pole yard for 'hot sticking' (the use of fiberglass poles with steel attachments for handling of electrically charged lines). This school has been in operation for 40 years with approximately 250 students per year attending. Approximately 3 to 4 minor accidents occur each year. These accidents are classified as non-time loss accidents. In 40 years, only one major accident occurred when a student fell from a pole. It is expected that NUTS would experience a similar minimal accident rate.

CTF. Reasonably foreseeable accidents during operation would be falls from scaffolding, hazards commonly associated with the installation of equipment such as electrical hazards, hazards from lifting, or the use of power tools. Accidents occurring from these types of activities are minimal.

Socioeconomic Impacts: Less than two dozen additional people are expected to be employed due to the proposed action. There would be no discernible impact to employment levels within Benton and Franklin Counties.

Environmental Justice: Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, requires that federal agencies identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs and activities on minority and low-income populations. The analysis of the impacts in this EA indicates that there will be minimal impacts to both the offsite population and potential workforce by implementing the proposed action, because the proposed action will occur predominately on the Hanford Site and the offsite environmental impacts from the proposed action in this EA are expected to be minimal. Therefore, it is not expected that there will be any disproportionately high and adverse impacts to any minority or low-income portion of the community.

Cumulative Impacts: No substantial cumulative impacts are expected.

DETERMINATION: Based on the analysis contained in the EA, and considering the pre-approval comments of the Nez Perce Tribe, the Yakama Nation, the State of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Oregon Office of Energy I conclude that the proposed action to provide additional personal protection and public safety through expanding training and equipment testing facilities at the Volpentest Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response Training and Education Center (HAMMER) on the Hanford Site does not constitute a “major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment” within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, an EIS is not required.

Issued at Richland, Washington, this 6th day of November, 2002.

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Manager
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