

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE MATERIAL STAGING CAPABILITY FACILITY AT THE PANTEX PLANT



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR
MATERIAL STAGING CAPABILITY FACILITY
AT THE PANTEX PLANT

AGENCY: Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a semi-autonomous agency within the United States (U.S.) Department of Energy (DOE), is responsible for meeting the national security requirements established by the President and Congress to maintain and enhance the safety, reliability, and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. The Pantex Plant (Pantex), located northeast of Amarillo, Texas, is one of NNSA's major operating sites and has been the nation's primary nuclear weapons assembly, maintenance, testing, and disassembly facility since 1975.

Current staging for nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon components at Pantex is not as efficient as it could be and the required capacity is projected to be exceeded soon. NNSA has determined that a new staging facility is needed at Pantex to address the identified staging shortfall. This new facility would provide a secure, sustainable facility capable of supporting staging requirements in a manner that supports NNSA's national security mandate.

In accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) and the DOE Implementing Procedures, NNSA prepared the Material Staging Capability facility (MSC) Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with constructing and operating the MSC at Pantex (DOE/EA-2306).

The Pantex Field Office Manager has determined that the Proposed Action described in the MSC EA is not a major Federal action that significantly affects the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required.

PROPOSED ACTION ALTERNATIVE: The MSC would enable NNSA to relocate the current staging of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon components to a new facility south of the current production area, which would improve efficiency, safety, and security. The MSC would be located outside the existing security structure and would consist of a new aboveground loading/unloading area with a corkscrew ramp to provide access to the new underground staging facilities, as well as access to the existing production area South ramp system. The underground staging structures would be located directly south of the new loading/unloading area. After completion of the construction of the loading/unloading area, the existing South security structure would be extended around the building, enclosing the loading/unloading area inside the South material access area. The Proposed Action is described in detail in Chapter 2 of the MSC EA.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: Under the No-Action Alternative, NNSA would not construct and operate the MSC. Staging of pits, other nuclear materials, and nuclear weapons and components would continue as described in Section 2.1. If materials from other sites are transferred to Pantex,

those materials would continue to be staged in existing facilities. Logistical congestion, operational inflexibility, and the need for increased security measures would continue.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: Permanent land disturbance associated with new facilities would be limited to approximately 6 acres. In addition, up to 50 acres could be permanently used as a soils placement area, and 178 acres could be temporarily disturbed as spoils and construction laydown areas. The land that would be disturbed by the MSC was taken out of agricultural production in the 1940's for ordinance manufacturing, and thus, is not considered prime farmland. Visually, Pantex would remain a highly developed area with an industrial appearance.

With regard to utility requirements, the existing infrastructure at Pantex would be adequate to support the MSC. Water requirements for MSC construction and operations would represent approximately 1.9 percent of water use at Pantex. No water quality impacts are expected from operations as stormwater and effluents would be managed under existing permits, as required. Short-term air quality impacts associated with construction would occur, but emissions would be below *de minimis* thresholds. There are no radiological emissions or releases associated with MSC operations.

Construction of the MSC would have short- and long-term less than significant adverse effects on biological resources, including loss of habitat and wildlife disturbance. The MSC would not reduce the distribution or viability of species or habitats of concern, including the taking of a listed species. Construction activities would not impact cultural resources. Because the peak construction workforce (350 persons) would be negligible compared to the population in the region of influence, socioeconomic impacts during construction, although beneficial, are expected to be negligible. The operational workforce (10 persons) for the MSC would be comprised of the same workers who currently conduct these operations at Pantex.

The MSC would not increase waste generation compared to the No-Action Alternative. Workers would be subject to minimal occupational risks and there would be no change in dose to radiation workers compared to the No-Action Alternative. The MSC would be a Hazard Category (HC)-2 nuclear facility, meaning that there would be no potential for significant off-site consequences, however it will not be characterized as a HC-2 building and is exempt from 10 CFR 830. Postulated accidents would not result in high consequences, and no member of the public would be exposed to radiological doses or chemical concentrations that could result in irreversible or other serious health effects.

DETERMINATION: Based on the analysis in DOE/EA-2306, I conclude that the Proposed Action to construct and operate the MSC at Pantex does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, preparation of an EIS is not required.

Issued in Amarillo, Texas, this day of July 2026.

Jason Armstrong
Manager, Pantex Field Office