

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
OF THE LAWRENCE BERKELEY NATIONAL LABORATORY
SEISMIC LIFE-SAFETY MODERNIZATION, AND REPLACEMENT OF
GENERAL PURPOSE BUILDINGS, PHASE 2B (DOE/EA-1634)**

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-1634) for the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) Seismic Life-Safety Modernization, and Replacement of General Purpose Buildings, Phase 2B. Seventeen comment letters were received and addressed in the Final EA. Based on the analysis in the EA including the responses to the comments, DOE has determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not necessary and DOE is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

PURPOSE AND NEED: The purpose and need of the LBNL Seismic Phase 2B Project is to remedy or remove LBNL space which poses seismic life-safety risks and to provide seismically safe and modern research space at LBNL.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: The Proposed Action would remove approximately 43,000 gross square feet (gsf) of office and laboratory space through the demolition of two buildings (25/25B and 55) deemed seismically deficient under the University of California (UC) Seismic Rating system and six antiquated trailers (71C, D, F, J, K, and P) that cannot be cost-effectively upgraded. Approximately 43,000 gsf of new space would be provided in a new general-purpose laboratory and office building (GPL), which meets all federal requirements regarding energy conservation and sustainability. The proposed GPL would be constructed at the Building 25/25B demolition site. The Proposed Action would also seismically upgrade Building 85/85A, the site-wide Hazardous Waste Handling Facility (HWHF), which is deemed seismically deficient under the UC Seismic Rating system.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: The EA assessed a No-Action Alternative, several alternate GPL locations, an alternative to constructing a GPL, and a reduced scope alternative. Assessment of the No-Action Alternative was used as a baseline against which to compare the impacts of the Proposed Action. The EA also identified other alternatives that were considered but rejected and therefore not assessed in the EA.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: DOE evaluated the potential environmental consequences of the Proposed Action, the alternatives, and the No Action Alternative and found no potentially significant environmental impacts.

The EA supports the conclusion that population and housing, socioeconomics and environmental justice, public services, cultural resources, land use and planning, soils, intentional destructive acts, and aviation hazards would have clearly insignificant effects and thus further investigation and analysis was not required.

The EA identified minor impacts for geology and seismicity, hazardous substances and human health, biological resources, aesthetics, transportation and traffic, noise, air quality, greenhouse gases, utilities and waste management, wildland fires, and traffic accidents.

The seismic and geological analysis recognized that there is active faulting and an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone within LBNL. The EA considered the consequences of potential earthquakes, landslides, and liquefaction on the Proposed Action and found no significant impacts. The GPL would comply with the stringent seismic design requirements prescribed in the California Building Code to ensure that the building would be able to withstand likely earthquakes. Its design and construction would be specifically tailored to the site based on site-specific geotechnical assessments. The EA supports the conclusion that the proposed location of the GPL is appropriate for the siting and operation of this DOE facility. The seismic strengthening of Buildings 85/85A would also be based on site-specific geotechnical investigations and would enhance the safety of the HWHF.

The hazardous substances and human health analysis considered the potential risks of the hazardous and radioactive substances that might be encountered during the demolition and excavation phases of construction, as well as of those substances that would be used during the operational phase. The analysis found that construction workers, operational phase workers, the public, and the environment would be adequately protected from exposure to such substances.

The EA identified wildland fire risk as a potential concern at the LBNL site, and also described the considerable resources, infrastructure, and planning that has been devoted to fire protection. Construction activities have the potential to ignite adjacent areas, but the potential for uncontrolled wildland fires at LBNL would be very low as a result of LBNL-wide measures adopted to control fires. Potential release of toxic materials into the environment from the General Purpose Laboratory due to a wildland fire is not reasonably foreseeable. Potential effects of wildland fire on the HWHF were analyzed in an earlier HWHF EA but are not pertinent to the scope of this EA or Proposed Action.

The EA reflected that the GPL would scarcely be visible from medium-range and long-range viewpoints and the building's features would minimize light and glare. The demolition component would remove several functional structures that are aging and architecturally unremarkable.

In addition to the direct and indirect impacts described above, DOE analyzed potential cumulative effects of the Proposed Action. Included in the analyses were past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions proposed in the same timeframe as the Proposed Action and either in the vicinity of the Proposed Action or the alternative sites. The EA reflects that there would only be minor environmental effects from the Proposed Action by itself, or cumulatively when taken in conjunction with the other projects planned for the timeframe of mid-2010 to late 2018.

PUBLIC AVAILABILITY: DOE issued the draft EA for public comment on June 28, 2010 and the comment period closed on July 28, 2010. A public information session was held on July 15, 2010. The draft EA was distributed to local, state, and federal government officials as well as members of the public. The Final EA and FONSI may be reviewed, and copies of the documents obtained, at the following website and/or location: <http://www.lbl.gov/Community/SeismicPhase2B/index.html>.

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The Final EA and FONSI may also be reviewed at the City of Berkeley Public Library:

Berkeley Public Library
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FURTHER INFORMATION ON NEPA PROCESS: For further information on the NEPA process, please contact:

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DETERMINATION: Based on the findings of this FONSI, and after careful consideration of all public and agency comments, DOE has determined that the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the context of NEPA. Therefore, preparation of an EIS is not required.

Issued at Berkeley, California, this 4th day of August 2010.



Aundra Richards, Site Office Manager
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