



FEMA

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ST. CHARLES PARISH DHS/EP EOC COMMUNICATIONS TOWER
SAINT CHARLES PARISH, LOUISIANA
PORT SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
PROJECT # 2010-PU-T0-K035**

BACKGROUND

In accordance with 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Subpart B, Agency Implementing Procedures, Part 10.9, an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared pursuant to Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as implemented by the regulations promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ; 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). This EA informed FEMA's decision on whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The proposed project is to construct a 250-foot new communications tower, with a lightning rod, any antennae, or other devices mounted to the structure resulting in a maximum height of 275 feet in Saint Charles Parish, Louisiana. Saint Charles Parish has been awarded funding under the 2010 Port Security Grant Program (PSGP) to fund the Proposed Action. The funding grant number is 2010-PU-T0-K035. This program provides funding to public safety agencies to construct and implement equipment and programs that will increase and protect critical communications infrastructure in the event of a natural disaster, terrorism event, as well as during routine operations.

Two project alternatives were considered in this EA: 1) No Action; and 2) Construction of 250-foot Saint Charles Parish Communication Tower (Proposed Action). Under the No Action alternative, the proposed tower would not be constructed. The existing Emergency Operations Center (EOC) communications tower has reached its capacity and cannot support additional communications equipment needed for regional maritime risk management efforts or for the new EOC building, placing public safety at risk during emergencies due to communications among emergency responders being compromised.

The Proposed Action Alternative is to construct a maximum 275-foot new free-standing communications tower, including a lightning rod, any antennae, or associated equipment to be mounted to the structure, that meets or exceeds the American National Standards Institute/ Telecommunications Industry Association 222 Revision G (Structure Class III supporting public safety, emergency operations and other mission critical communications) specification for communications towers. Furthermore, the installation of antennae and associated equipment will provide integrated emergency communications between federal, state, and local agencies during emergency situations. The antennae would include microwave dishes that are to be used to send and receive information over long distances without the limitations associated with connection to

land lines/cables (primarily interruptions in service due to damage to land lines/cables during emergencies or natural disasters). The facility construction also includes an emergency generator with a propane tank. The preliminary foundation design includes: twenty-four (24), 14 inch x 73 feet H-piles with 18 inch x 1-1/4 inch base cap driven 70 feet below grade, twenty-eight (28), 14 inch x 73 feet H-piles with 18 inch x 1-1/4 inch base cap driven 65 feet below grade, and a 3 feet 6 inch thick, 30 feet diameter concrete foundation. The site consists of a shell parking lot and grassed land. The proposed communications tower will be designed for future enhancements to mission critical hardware. The 529 square foot tower footprint will be adjacent to the new EOC building that is currently under construction.

The new tower will affect approximately 60% of the Port of South Louisiana's maritime jurisdiction from Mississippi River mile 114.8 - 168.7 Above Head of Passes (AHP). The tower is designed to accommodate tower assets including antennae for multiple VHF communications frequencies, parabolic antennae for microwave backhaul radios systems, security cameras to monitor critical navigation points on the Mississippi River from MM 155 – 157 AHP and point-to-multipoint devices to accommodate connectivity to Marine Domain Awareness field devices.

The proposed tower is to be located at 15026 River Road (LA Hwy. 18) in Hahnville, Louisiana along the Mississippi River (29.96361 Latitude; -90.40472 Longitude). The site of the proposed tower is on land currently owned by Saint Charles Parish.

A public notice was posted in *The Times-Picayune* newspaper on June 11, 2012, and the draft EA was made available for comment at the Saint Charles Parish East Regional Library, located at 160 West Campus Drive, Destrehan, LA 70047 and on the FEMA website for a 15-day public comment period. No comments were received from the public during the 15-day comment period.

FINDINGS

The Proposed Action as described in the EA will not adversely impact geology, soil, seismicity, water resources, wetlands, floodplains, coastal resources, wild and scenic rivers, threatened or endangered species, historic properties, American Indian or religious sites, air quality, noise, infrastructure, utilities, transportation, or waste management, or socioeconomic resources. Positive long-term impacts to socioeconomic and environmental justice are anticipated since the project will provide better emergency support to the community. During the construction period, short-term impacts to soils, air quality, water quality, waste management, noise, traffic, and health and safety are anticipated. The emergency generator will produce negligible adverse air emissions as the use of the generator will be use only during power interruptions (short-term) and the generator utilizes propane which produces only minor emissions. Noise from the emergency generator will occur only during power interruptions which will be short-term in nature. All populations, including minority and low-income populations, will benefit from the Proposed Action. All adverse impacts require conditions to minimize and mitigate impacts to the proposed project site and surrounding areas.

CONDITIONS

The following conditions must be met as part of this project. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize the receipt of federal funding.

1. This review does not address all federal, state and local requirements. Acceptance of federal funding requires recipient to comply with all federal, state and local laws. Failure to obtain all appropriate federal, state and local environmental permits and clearances may jeopardize federal funding.
2. Best available techniques to control erosion and sedimentation must be used. Best Management Practices (BMPs) using biodegradable barriers such as hay bales to minimize erosion. All BMPs must follow the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality Pollutant Discharge Elimination System guidelines.
3. Excavated soil and waste materials must be managed and disposed of in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations. If contaminated materials are discovered during the construction activities, the work will cease until the appropriate procedures can be implemented and permits obtained. Any hazardous materials discovered, generated, or used during construction will be handled and disposed of in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.
4. Construction will take place during daytime hours and equipment will meet all local, state, and federal noise regulations.
5. Saint Charles Parish will adhere to the conditions stipulated in the consultation letters from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, The Board of Commissioners of the Lafourche Levee District, and the Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana.
6. In the event that archeological deposits, including any Native American pottery, stone tools, bones, or human remains, are uncovered, the project shall be halted and the applicant shall stop all work immediately in the vicinity of the discovery and take reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. All archeological findings will be secured and access to the sensitive area restricted. The applicant will inform FEMA immediately and FEMA will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) and Tribes and work in sensitive areas cannot resume until consultation is completed and appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that the project is in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).
7. Any change to the approved scope of work will require re-evaluation for compliance with NEPA and other Laws and Executive Orders.

CONCLUSIONS

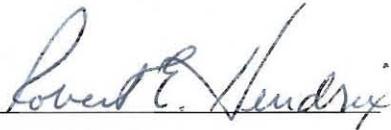
Based on the findings of the EA, coordination with the appropriate agencies, and adherence to the project conditions set forth in this FONSI, FEMA has determined that the proposed project qualifies as a major federal action that will not significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environment, nor does it have the potential for significant cumulative effects. As a result of this FONSI, an EIS will not be prepared (44 CFR Part 10.9) and the proposed project as described in the attached EA may proceed.

APPROVAL



Kevin Jaynes, CHMM
Regional Environmental Officer
FEMA Region 6

Date 6/26/12



for George A. Robinson
Acting Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 6

Date 6/27/12