



FEMA

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWER
GALVESTON ISLAND, GALVESTON COUNTY, TEXAS
HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
PROJECT # 2011-SS-00019 (14839)**

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 350-foot self-supporting communications tower and Tower Antenna Network that will be located on the lawn of the Galveston County Courthouse at 502 ½ 59th Street, Galveston County, Galveston, Texas at 29.293694 latitude, and -94.833556 longitude. County of Galveston submitted the project under the application number 2011-SS-00019 (14839) of the Homeland Security Grant Program. 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 a 350-foot self-support communications tower (Proposed Action). Under the No-Action Alternative, the proposed project would not be constructed. No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated with the No-Action Alternative. Galveston Island would continue to rely on existing communication infrastructure which does not provide sufficient coverage throughout the region. This would leave emergency response unchanged and results in a lower level of overall public safety. The lack of adequate communication directly impacts command, control, rescue, event analysis, and other critical operations. The No Action Alternative would not address the needs for Galveston Island.

The Proposed Action consists of construction of a 350-foot self-supporting communications tower and Tower Antenna Network to provide improved radio coverage to its existing public safety radio communications system. The site would also include a 12x32-foot concrete equipment shelter with an integrated generator room on raised foundation, a propane generator, and multiple tower antennas. All temporary construction-staging activities are proposed to occur in the existing paved parking lot located adjacent to the Proposed Action site to the west. Staging will occur for only the amount of time necessary to complete construction of the

Proposed Action, approximately 14 weeks. Furthermore, staging will encompass only the necessary amount of space to complete the construction of the Proposed Action, less than 500 square-feet. Galveston Island has determined that the Proposed Action would successfully address radio coverage issues.

A public notice was posted in the Galveston Daily News on May 6, 2013, and the draft EA was made available for comment at the Rosenberg Library, located at 2310 Sealy Street, Galveston, Texas 77550, 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, wetlands, cultural resources environmental justice, solid waste, man-made hazards, or infrastructure. During the construction period, there are potential short-term and minor impacts to soils, surface water, air quality, and noise. Impacts to the floodplain will not be significant. All short-term and non-significant impacts require conditions to minimize and mitigate impacts to the Proposed Action location and surrounding areas. The proposed 350-foot telecommunications tower could have potential adverse impacts on migratory birds. However, the tower's location outside of sensitive habitats and flyways, the absence of guyed wires, and the use of no high intensity lighting (i.e., low intensity lighting) would mitigate collision-related bird mortality.

The new 350-foot communications tower would be a great asset to the residents of the City of Galveston and Galveston County in the event of an emergency. Fire fighters, rescue squad and the sheriff's department would be able to communicate with each other in almost the entire county.

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. Applicant must coordinate with the local floodplain administrator and obtain required permits prior to initiating work. All coordination pertaining to these activities and applicant compliance with any conditions should be documented and copies forwarded to the state and FEMA for inclusion in the permanent project files.

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. Measures will be taken to limit emission of fugitive dust, including watering down of construction areas. Construction/upgrade related to air quality impacts will last for the duration of construction/upgrade activities and occur during normal working hours (i.e., 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.).
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. The tower will be freestanding and use low-intensity lighting consistent with FAA guidelines to help minimize adverse impacts to migratory birds.
8. Significant change, addition, and/or supplement to the approved scope of work which alters the existing use and function of the structure, including additional work not funded by FEMA but performed substantially at the same time, will require re-submission of the application prior to construction to FEMA for re-evaluation under the National Environmental Policy Act.

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
Regional Environmental Officer
FEMA Region 6

Date 5/22/13



for George A. Robinson
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 6

Date 5/22/13