



Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Nuclear Facility Portion of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building Replacement Project at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico

SUMMARY



Conceptual Drawing CMRR Facility



OVERVIEW

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is a semi-autonomous agency within the Department of Energy (DOE). NNSA is responsible for the management and security of the nation's nuclear weapons, nuclear nonproliferation and naval reactor programs. NNSA is also responsible for administration of the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

Since the early 1950s, DOE has conducted analytical chemistry and materials characterization work in the Chemical and Metallurgy Research Building (CMR) at LANL. CMR supports various national security missions including nuclear nonproliferation programs; the manufacturing, development, and surveillance of pits (the fissile core of a nuclear warhead); life extension programs; dismantlement efforts; waste management; material recycle and recovery; and research. CMR is a Hazard Category 2 nuclear facility with significant nuclear material and nuclear operations, and the potential for significant onsite consequences.

The CMR is almost 60 years old and near the end of its useful life. Many of its utility systems and structural components are aged, outmoded, and deteriorated. Recent geological studies identified a seismic fault trace located beneath two of the wings of CMR, which raised concerns about the structural integrity of the facility. Over the long term, NNSA cannot continue to operate the mission-critical CMR support capabilities in the existing CMR building at an acceptable level of risk to worker safety and health. NNSA has already taken steps to minimize the risks associated with continued operations at CMR. To ensure that NNSA can fulfill its national security mission for the next 50 years in a safe, secure, and environmentally sound manner, NNSA proposed in 2002 to construct a CMR replacement facility, known as the CMRR.

NNSA has undertaken extensive environmental review of the CMRR project; after thoroughly analyzing its potential environmental impacts and considering public comments, NNSA issued a Final EIS in November 2003 and a Record of Decision (ROD) in February 2004. The ROD announced that CMRR would consist of two buildings: a single, above-ground consolidated special nuclear material-capable, Hazard Category 2 laboratory building (the CMRR-NF), and a separate but adjacent administrative office and support building, the Radiological Laboratory/Utility/Office Building (RLUOB). Construction of the RLUOB is complete and radiological operations are scheduled to begin in 2013.

Since issuance of the 2004 ROD, new developments have arisen indicating that changes to CMRR are appropriate. Specifically, a new site-wide analysis of the geophysical structures that underlay the LANL area was prepared. In light of this new geologic information regarding seismic conditions at the site, and more detailed information on the various support functions and infrastructure needed for construction such as concrete batch plants and lay-down areas, NNSA has proposed changes to the design of CMRR-NF. Even with these changes, the scope of operations remains the same as before (the 2004 ROD), as does the quantity of special nuclear material that can be handled and stored in CMRR-NF.

Though the changes would affect the structural aspects of the building and not its purpose, NNSA elected to prepare a Supplemental EIS (SEIS) to address the ways in which the potential environmental effects of the proposed CMRR-NF may have changed since the project was analyzed in the 2003 EIS. Development of the SEIS includes a scoping process, public meetings, and a comment period on a draft SEIS to ensure that the public has a full opportunity to participate in this review. Because NNSA decided in the 2004 ROD to build CMRR – as a necessary step in maintaining critical analytical chemistry and materials characterization capabilities at LANL – the SEIS is not intended to revisit that decision. Instead the SEIS is limited to supplementing the prior analysis by examining the potential environmental impacts related to the proposed change in CMRR design. So in addition to the no-action alternative (proceed with