

§ 775.7

(6) Internal modifications or improvements to structure, or buildings to accommodate mail processing, computer, communication or other similar types of equipment or other actions which do not involve modification to the external walls of the facility.

(7) Joint development and/or joint use projects that only involve internal modifications to an existing facility.

(8) Noise abatement measures, such as construction of noise barriers and installation of noise control materials.

(9) Actions which require concurrence or approval of another federal agency where the action is a categorical exclusion under the NEPA regulations of that federal agency.

(e) Categorical exclusions relating to real estate actions.

(1) Obtaining, granting, disposing, or changing of easements, licenses and permits, rights-of-way and similar interests.

(2) Extension, renewal, renegotiation, or termination of existing lease agreements.

(3) Purchase of Postal Service occupied leased property where the planned postal uses do not differ significantly from the past uses of the site.

(4) Acquisition or disposal of existing facilities and real property where the planned uses do not differ significantly from past uses of the site.

(5) Acquisition of real property not connected to specific facility plans or when necessary to protect the interests of the Postal Service in advance of final project approval. This categorical exclusion only applies to the acquisition. Any subsequent use of the site for a facility project must be considered under this part.

(6) Disposal through sale or outlease of unimproved real property.

(7) Disposal through sale, outlease, transfer or exchange of real property to other federal or state agencies.

(8) Acquisition and disposal through sale, lease, transfer or exchange of real property that does not involve an increase in volumes, concentrations, or discharge rates of wastes, air emissions, or water effluents, and that under reasonably foreseeable uses, have generally similar environmental impacts as compared to those before the acquisition or disposal. A determina-

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tion that the proposed action is categorically excluded can be based upon previous "reference actions" documented under § 775.6(b)(17).

(9) Acquisition and disposal through sale, lease, transfer, reservation or exchange of real property for nature and habitat preservation, conservation, a park or wildlife management.

(10) New construction, Postal Service owned or leased, or joint development and joint use projects, of any facility unless the proposed action is listed as requiring an EA in § 775.5.

(11) Expansion or improvement of an existing facility where the expansion is within the boundaries of the site or occurs in a previously developed area unless the proposed action is listed as requiring an EA in § 775.5.

(12) Construction and disturbance pursuant to a nationwide, regional or general permit issued by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

(13) Any activity in floodplains being regulated pursuant to § 775.6 and is not listed as requiring an EA in § 775.5.

[63 FR 45720, Aug. 27, 1998]

§ 775.7 Planning and early coordination.

Early planning and coordination among postal functional groups is required to properly consider environmental issues that may be attributable to the proposed action. Operational and facility personnel must cooperate in the early concept stages of a program or project. If it is determined that more than one postal organization will be involved in any action, a lead organization will be selected to complete the NEPA process before any NEPA documents are prepared. If it is determined that a project has both real estate and non-real estate actions, the facilities functional organization will take the lead.

[63 FR 45721, Aug. 27, 1998]

§ 775.8 Environmental evaluation guidelines.

(a) *Approach.* When dealing with proposals which may have an impact on the human environment, environmental coordinators, planners, decision makers, and other officials responsible for actions, will, as appropriate:

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(1) Use a systematic approach that integrates natural and social sciences and environmental design in planning and making decisions.

(2) Identify environmental effects and values in detail, and appraise them in conjunction with economic and technical analyses.

(3) Consider environmental documents at all decision points at which other planning documents are considered. (Plans and decisions are to reflect environmental values. Proposed actions should be assessed as soon as their effects can be meaningfully evaluated, to provide the bases for early decision on whether detailed environmental impact statements must be prepared.)

(4) Study, develop, describe, and evaluate at all decision points, reasonable alternatives to recommended actions which may have a significant effect on the environment.

(b) *Proposal requirements.* When an environmental impact statement has been prepared, it must accompany the proposal through and be used in the decision-making process. Any other proposal must refer to applicable environmental documents (e.g., determination of categorical exclusion; finding of no significant impact; notice of intent to prepare an impact statement), and relevant comments and responses.

(c) *Lead agency arrangements.* If the Postal Service and another Federal agency become involved in a lead agency arrangement for the preparation of an environmental impact statement, the Service will cooperate fully.

[44 FR 63525, Nov. 5, 1979. Redesignated at 63 FR 45719, Aug. 27, 1998]

§ 775.9 Environmental evaluation process.

(a) *All actions*—(1) *Assessment of actions.* An environmental checklist may be used to support a record of environmental consideration as the determination that the proposed action does not require an environmental assessment. An environmental assessment must be prepared for each proposed action except that an assessment need not be made if a determination is made that:

(i) The action is one of a class listed in § 775.6, Categorical Exclusions, and

(ii) The action is not affected by extraordinary circumstances which may cause it to have a significant environmental effect, or

(iii) The action is a type that is not a major federal action with a significant impact upon the environment.

(2) *Findings of no significant impact.* If an environmental assessment indicates that there is no significant impact of a proposed action on the environment, an environmental impact statement is not required. A “finding of no significant impact” (FONSI) is prepared and published in accordance with § 775.13. When the proposed action is approved, it may be accomplished without further environmental consideration. A FONSI document briefly presents the reasons why an action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and states that an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. It must refer to the environmental assessment and any other environmentally pertinent documents related to it. The assessment may be included in the finding if it is short, in which case the discussion in the assessment need not be repeated in the finding. The FONSI may be a mitigated FONSI in which case the required mitigation factors should be listed in the FONSI. The use of a mitigated FONSI is conditioned upon the implementation of the identified mitigation measures in the EA that support the FONSI. Unless the mitigation measures are implemented by the responsible official, the use of an EA in lieu of an EIS is not acceptable.

(3) Impact statement preparation decision and notices. If an environmental assessment indicates that a proposed major action would have a significant impact on the environment, a notice of intent to prepare an impact statement is published (see § 775.13) and an environmental impact statement is prepared.

(4) Role of impact statement in decision making. An environmental impact statement is used, with other analyses and materials, to decide which alternative should be pursued, or whether a proposed action should be abandoned or other courses of action pursued. See § 775.12 for restrictions on the timing of this decision.