



LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT REFERENCE GUIDE

TITLE: Procedures for Environmental Review of Proposed Projects

NUMBER: REF-5314.2

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ROUTING

All Schools and
Offices
Local District
Superintendents
Local District
Operations
Coordinators
Local District
Facilities Directors

PURPOSE: On May 9, 2017, the Board of Education adopted the revised *Los Angeles Unified School District Procedures for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act*. This Reference Guide provides procedural guidelines to ensure proposed projects are evaluated and approved in accordance with State law.

MAJOR CHANGES: This Reference Guide replaces REF-5314.1, *Procedures for Environmental Review of Proposed Projects*, March 7, 2012. This revision includes design and construction guidelines for buildings located in “high” radon zones and guidelines and procedures to address polychlorinated biphenyl’s (PCBs) in building materials. The major changes can be found in Section IV of this Reference Guide.

INSTRUCTIONS: As directed by the Board of Education, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS) is required to review the following types of projects regardless of funding source:

- Proposed new school site;
- Expansion, major repair, or modernization of existing school facilities, including paving projects;
- Proposed placement/removal of bungalows or other temporary structures at existing school facilities;
- Change in use or occupancy of existing facilities;
- Proposed co-location or land lease agreements for charter school facilities;
- Proposed joint-use and innovation funds programs;
- Proposed lease or use of non-District property for District purposed;
- Proposed Low Impact Developments (LIDS);
- Proposed Drought Response Outreach Program for Schools (DROPS);
- Proposed installation of radiofrequency (RF) devices including access points, smart switches, laptops and other wireless devices; and



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- Proposed installation of electromagnetic field (EMF) generating equipment including large transformers, electrical panels or similar energized equipment.

OEHS is not required for minor activities involving routine maintenance, repair, and activities that do not have the potential to impact public health, safety, or the environment.

I. Application for OEHS Review

It is the responsibility of the project proponent (i.e., administrative executive, director, manager, or designee) to provide written notification to OEHS of any project that may result in direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect changes to the environment before taking any action to implement the proposed project. All District activities including projects initiated by community groups, Local Districts, schools and District departments such as Asset Management, Project Execution, Maintenance & Operations, Innovation and Charter Schools Division, and Division of Adult and Continuing Education must undergo OEHS evaluation.

II. OEHS Review

The degree of review is based upon the location and scope of the proposed project. This may include but is not limited to evaluation under the auspices of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), certification that the project will not create a new significant safety hazard or exacerbate an existing safety hazard to students (California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 5, Section 14010), and the preparation of related technical studies such as a Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) or equivalent.

III. CEQA Applicability

To initiate the review process, the project proponent must complete and submit electronically a *Preliminary Project Referral Form* (Attachment 1) along with available site plans and architectural drawings to environmental_review@lausd-oehs.org. OEHS will review these documents to determine the scope of the proposed project and extent of CEQA analysis required. This may include documentation that the project is categorically exempt from the need to prepare an environmental impact report. There are 33 classes of categorical exemptions and the following classes may apply for most school-based projects.



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- Class 1: Existing Facilities
- Class 2: Replacement or Reconstruction
- Class 3: New Construction
- Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land
- Class 14: Minor Additions to Schools
- Class 32: Infill Development Projects

If a CEQA exemption is applicable, a Notice of Exemption will be prepared by OEHS and, when deemed appropriate, filed with the Los Angeles County Clerk and the State Office of Planning and Research. Additional consultation with the project proponent may be required should the scope of the project indicate additional study is warranted.

The following is a list of additional studies that may be required to determine if the proposed project qualifies for a categorical exemption.

- Air Quality
- Hazardous Waste Site Designation
- Hazard and assessment studies identified in Section 4.0
- Historical Resources
- Light/Glare
- Noise
- Parking Demand/Traffic
- Shade/Shadow

OEHS will provide the scope of services and process the appropriate work authorizations to complete the required technical studies.

When a project does not qualify for a categorical exemption, OEHS will prepare an Initial Study to determine the appropriate level of CEQA review. The following are examples of CEQA documentation that may be utilized to characterize a project's impact on the environment.

- *Negative Declaration (ND)* – is prepared when it is determined that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment.
- *Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)* – is prepared when it is determined that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment but these effects can be mitigated to below a defined level of significance.



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- *Environmental Impact Report (EIR)* – is prepared when it is determined that the proposed project has the potential to result in significant and unavoidable impacts.

In the case of an MND or EIR, feasible mitigation measures must be identified and incorporated as part of the project. Upon completion of the appropriate level of CEQA review, the document is circulated for public comment. Based upon the comments received, the document is finalized and submitted to the Board of Education for adoption/certification. Following adoption/certification the project can be approved. Subsequently, OEHS will file a Notice of Determination with the Los Angeles County Clerk and the State Office of Planning and Research.

IV. Hazard and Assessment Studies

The presence of potentially toxic or hazardous conditions on or in the vicinity of a proposed or existing District facility must be addressed to ensure the health and safety of students and staff, as well as protection of the environment. Based upon the location and scope of the proposed project, the following studies may be required:

- School Safety Certification (CCR Title 5, Section 14010) – This certification is required by the California Department of Education (CDE) for State-funded projects. Completion of this task requires that an evaluation be completed to document that the project will not create a new significant safety hazard or exacerbate an existing safety hazard to students.
- Site Screening – A site reconnaissance, aerial photograph review, and environmental database search is required to identify all potential sources of risk which may impact the health and safety of individuals attending a proposed elementary or secondary school. The results are compared to the *OEHS Distance Criteria for School Siting/Screening* (Attachment 2) to determine the proximity of the project site to any rail lines, pipelines, oil fields, methane zones, methane buffer zones, radon zones, freeways, landfills, industrial facilities, and high voltage power lines. All sources of environmental risk are evaluated further and may include one or more of the following specialized studies.
 - *Air Quality Health Risk Assessment (HRA)* – to characterize identified off-site sources, calculate emissions, and assess the subsequent health risk.



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- *Radon Assessment* – to characterize potential indoor air risks from radon gas intrusion.
- *Pipeline Safety Hazard Assessment (PSHA)* – to characterize potential risks from a hazardous material pipeline rupture.
- *Rail Safety Study (RSS)* – to characterize the potential risk from train activities, including derailments.
- *Electromagnetic Field Exposure Management Plan (EMF Study)* – to assess the exposure from EMF from nearby power lines at a proposed school site and within the surrounding community.
- *Geohazard Report* – to assess potential geologic hazards, including the risk from faulting, seismic activity, landslides, liquefaction, flooding, and inundation.
- *Tank Safety Study* – to assess the risk associated with fuel or water storage tanks and reservoirs.
- *Methane Assessment* – to assess the potential risk associated with oil fields, methane zones and methane buffer zones.
- *PCB Assessment* – For any project where potential polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-containing building materials will be disturbed, a PCB Engineering Assessment (Phase 1) must be conducted prior to starting work to identify any PCB-containing building materials. OEHS has oversight responsibilities over projects involving PCBs. OEHS will provide direction to environmental consultants and abatement contractors concerning the proper handling and disposal of any PCB-containing building materials.

Facilities Services Division Policies and Procedures shall be updated to reflect these procedures. In addition, all assessments must be performed in accordance with “*Guidelines and Procedures to Address Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) in Building Materials*” and “*LAUSD Design Standards, Specification Document 02 8400, Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) Remediation*”.

- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) – The Phase I ESA documents historic site use as well as those of neighboring properties that may have impacted the site. It is generally required in instances of projects involving construction of new buildings, or where there will be disturbance of significant volumes of soil. Based on the



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findings of the Phase I ESA, further investigation and intrusive sampling may be required. This assessment must be completed utilizing the most current American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standard.

- Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) – The PEA characterizes subsurface contaminants and estimates the potential health risk to school occupants based on the results of a Phase I ESA. Prior to conducting fieldwork, a PEA workplan is prepared to identify the objectives for environmental sampling and define the methods by which they will be achieved. The PEA workplan is reviewed and revised in consultation with appropriate parties prior to implementation. In some cases, both the workplan and the PEA report are reviewed by the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), OEHS, and/or related environmental authority in order to ensure the quality of the environmental data gathered and conclusions drawn by the investigator are adequate. In general, the PEA report recommends one of three options: 1) no further action; 2) further assessment and characterization of risk; or 3) development and implementation of remedial action. In addition, there are some sites where the extent of contamination is substantial and the cost and time required to remediate may make the project infeasible. If further assessment is recommended, a supplemental workplan is prepared to fill remaining data gaps in the assessment.
- Remedial Action and Mitigation Measures – Should significant risks from subsurface contamination be identified, a Removal Action Workplan or Remedial Action Plan is prepared and implemented with oversight by OEHS and in some cases the DTSC or other appropriate regulatory agencies. Documentation of the implemented remedial action is included in a subsequent Remedial Action Completion Report

These studies must be conducted in consultation with OEHS staff. If significant risks are identified, mitigation measures must be evaluated and impacts reduced to acceptable levels consistent with regulatory standards and/or applicable guidance

- Building Design and Construction Measures – Should a building or similar structure be constructed or renovated for student and/or staff occupancy and is located in a “high” radon zone, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidance entitled “*Radon Prevention in the Design and Construction of Schools and Other Large Buildings*,”



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EPA/625/R-92/016, June 1994” (or latest published version) shall be reviewed and all relevant and appropriate measures incorporated in its design and construction to prevent radon gas infiltration.

V. Soil Management

Consideration must be given to the management of excavated soil associated with identified earthwork activities. Please note that excavated soils should only be reused on-site if they are to be placed beneath paved areas. If construction or earthmoving activities require import or export of soils and materials, OEHS must be notified to provide oversight to ensure that these activities are conducted in accordance with the requirements of District Specification 01 4524 (formally 1440) and in compliance with applicable environmental agency rules and requirements.

Furthermore, work must be stopped immediately and OEHS notified if subsurface features such as buried debris, tanks or seepage pits, stained/odoriferous soils, or items of potential cultural significance are found during construction related activities.

VI. Facility Safety Inspection

Prior to occupancy of newly constructed schools, structural additions, and related projects which add additional classroom space, or other projects where a Division of State Architects’ Form 6 PI is issued, a health and safety inspection is conducted following standard OEHS inspection protocols and reported in the *Essential Safety Checklist & Approval Form* (Attachment 3)

Prior to occupancy of modernized or renovated schools, a health and safety inspection is conducted following standard OEHS inspection protocols and reported in the *Essential Safety Checklist & Approval Form for Modernization Projects* (Attachment 4)

Both checklists are completed in accordance with OEHS’s *Occupancy Approval Criteria for Completed School Projects* (Attachment 5).

It is the responsibility of the project proponent to request the inspection at least two months prior to occupancy. Once all occupancy criteria have been satisfied, OEHS will issue a completed *Essential Safety Checklist & Approval Form*. Deficiencies that do not prevent a school project from opening will be documented by OEHS in a Corrective Action Notice (CAN) that is normally issued after occupancy is approved



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RELATED RESOURCES: “*Los Angeles Unified School District Procedures for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act, Office of Environmental Health and Safety, May 2017*”. A copy is available on the Office of Environmental Health and Safety website at <http://achieve.lausd.net/Page/2799>

“*Guidelines and Procedures to Address Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) in Building Materials, Office of Environmental Health and Safety, October 2016*” A copy is available on the Office of Environmental Health and Safety website at <http://achieve.lausd.net/Page/3495>

“*LAUSD Design Standards, Specification Document 02 8400, Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) Remediation, Rev 3.0, Revised February 1, 2017*”. A copy is available on the Office of Environmental Health and Safety website at <http://achieve.lausd.net/Page/3495>

ASSISTANCE: For assistance or further information, please contact the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (213) 241-3199.