

## § 26.4

Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

(b) *VA elements*, for the purposes of this part, means the Veterans Health Services and Research Administration (VHS&RA), the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the National Cemetery Administration (NCS), and the Office of Facilities.

(c) Other terms used in this part are defined in CEQ Regulations, 40 CFR part 1508.

(Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321-4370a)

[51 FR 37182, Oct. 20, 1986, as amended at 54 FR 34987, Aug. 23, 1989]

### § 26.4 Policy.

(a) VA must act with care in carrying out its mission of providing services for veterans to ensure it does so consistently with national environmental policies. Specifically, VA shall ensure that all practical means and measures are used to protect, restore, and enhance the quality of the human environment; to avoid or minimize adverse environmental consequences, consistently with other national policy considerations; and to attain the following objectives:

(1) Achieve the fullest possible use of the environment, without degradation, or undesirable and unintended consequences;

(2) Preserve historical, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, while maintaining, where possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety and individual choice;

(3) Achieve a balance between the use and development of resources, within the sustained capacity of the ecological system involved; and,

(4) Enhance the quality of renewable resources while working toward the maximum attainable recycling of non-renewable resources.

(b) VA elements shall:

(1) Interpret and administer the policies, regulations, and public laws of the United States in accordance with the policies set forth in the NEPA and CEQ Regulations;

(2) Prepare concise and clear environmental documents which shall be supported by documented environmental analyses;

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(3) Integrate the requirements of NEPA with Department planning and decision-making procedures;

(4) Encourage and facilitate involvement by affected agencies, organizations, interest groups and the public in decisions which affect the quality of the human environment; and,

(5) Consider alternatives to the proposed actions which are encompassed by the range of alternatives discussed in relevant environmental documents, and described in the environmental impact statement.

(Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321-4370a)

[51 FR 37182, Oct. 20, 1986, as amended at 54 FR 34987, Aug. 23, 1989]

### § 26.5 Responsibilities.

(a) The Director of the Office of Environmental Affairs shall:

(1) Be responsible to coordinate and provide guidance to VA elements on all environmental matters;

(2) Assist in the preparation of environmental documents by VA elements; and, where more than one VA element, or Federal, State, or local agency is involved, assign the lead VA element or propose the lead Federal, State or local agency to prepare the environmental documents;

(3) Recommend appropriate actions to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on those environmental matters for which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has final approval authority;

(4) Assist in resolution of disputes concerning environmental matters within VA, and among VA and other Federal, State and local agencies;

(5) Coordinate preparation of VA comments on draft and final environmental impact statements of other agencies;

(6) Serve as the VA's principal liaison to the CEQ, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Office of Management and Budget, and other Federal, State, and local agencies on VA environmental actions; and

(7) Prepare appropriate supplemental guidance on implementation of these regulations.

(b) VA General Counsel shall provide legal advice and assistance in meeting the requirement of NEPA, the CEQ Regulations and these regulations.

(c) The heads of each VA element shall:

(1) Adopt procedures to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with NEPA, the CEQ Regulations and these regulations; and

(2) Be responsible to prepare environmental documents relating to programs and proposed actions by their elements, when required by these regulations.

(Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321-4370a)

**§ 26.6 Environmental documents.**

(a) *Environmental Impact Statements.* The head of each VA element shall include a detailed written statement “in every recommendation or report on proposals for legislation and other major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environmental.” NEPA 102(2), 42 U.S.C. 4332(2) *see* CEQ Regulations, 40 CFR part 1502. An environmental impact statement shall be prepared in accordance with the following procedures:

(1) *Typical Classes of Action Which Normally Do Require Environmental Impact Statements:* (i) Proposed legislation (CEQ Regulation, 40 CFR 1508.17);

(ii) Acquisition of land in excess of 10 acres for development of a VA medical center facility;

(iii) Acquisition of land in excess of 50 acres for development of a VA national cemetery; and

(iv) Promulgation of policies which substantially alter agency programs and which have a significant effect on the quality of the human environmental.

(2) *Specific Criteria for Typical Classes of Action Which Normally Do Require Environmental Impact Statements:* (i) Probable significant degradation of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, designated wetlands or ecologically critical areas;

(ii) An increase in average daily vehicle traffic volume of at least 20 percent on access roads to the site or the major roadway network;

(iii) Probable conflict with Federal, State, or local environmental protection laws or requirements;

(iv) Probable threat or hazard to the public, or the involvement of highly uncertain risks to the environment;

(v) Similarity to previous actions that required an environmental impact statement; and

(vi) Probable conflict with, or significant effect on, local or regional zoning or comprehensive land use plans.

(b) *Categorical Exclusions.* A categorical exclusion is a “category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and which have been found to have no such effect in procedures adopted by a Federal Agency in implementation of these regulations . . . and for which, therefore, neither an environmental assessment (see subparagraph (c), *infra*) or an environmental impact statement is required.” CEQ Regulations, 40 CFR 1508.4.

(1) Typical classes of action which normally do not require either an Environmental Impact Statement or an Environmental Assessment:

(i) Repair, replacement, and new installation of primary or secondary electrical distribution systems;

(ii) Repair, replacement, and new installation of components such as windows, doors, roofs; and site elements such as sidewalks, patios, fences, retaining walls, curbs, water distribution lines, and sewer lines which involve work totally within VA property boundaries;

(iii) Routine VA grounds and facility maintenance activities;

(iv) Procurement activities for goods and services for routing facility operations maintenance and support;

(v) Interior construction or renovation;

(vi) New construction of 75,000 gross square feet or less;

(vii) Development of 20 acres of land or less within an existing cemetery, or development on acquired land of five acres or less;

(viii) Actions which involve support or ancillary appurtenances for normal operation;

(ix) Leases, licenses, permits, and easements;

(x) Reduction in force resulting from workload adjustments, reduced personnel or funding levels, skill imbalances or other similar causes;

(xi) VA policies, actions and studies which do not significantly affect the quality of the human environment;