

4.9 HEALTH AND SAFETY / HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

4.9.1 Proposed Project

4.9.1.1 Affected Environment

The Proposed Project area does not have a history of hazardous materials being present or a history of land uses that would involve the use or storage of hazardous materials (San Bernardino, 2007, General Plan Geology Map No. CJDJB).

Based on field surveys conducted in 2007 by the Chambers Group, Inc., no evidence of hazardous or solid waste materials dumping was observed within the Proposed Project footprint. In addition, Insignia Environmental conducted a database search using the Department of Toxic Substance Control Envirostor database and the California State Water Resource Control Board Geotracker database. The databases were searched for existing known contaminated sites within 2 miles of the Proposed Project alignment. No known records of contamination were identified.

Hazardous materials that may be on site during Proposed Project implementation include those usually associated with the operation and maintenance of vehicles and machinery, including diesel fuel, gasoline, hydraulic fluid, brake fluid, antifreeze, and lubricants. Other materials considered hazardous are chemicals used in portable toilets and the associated human waste. There is also the possibility of encountering unknown buried hazardous or toxic materials during construction excavation activities.

The County of San Bernardino has established Airport Safety Overlay Districts to provide greater safety to aviators and the general public by establishing requirements for land use compatibility reviews within designated areas that are in close proximity to a public use airport or heliport. Airport Safety Overlay District boundaries are designated on the San Bernardino County Land Use Plan as AR1, AR2, AR3, and AR4 and are generally located within an adopted Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan for public use airports within the County, including unincorporated areas, and within a low altitude/high speed corridor designated for military aircraft operations. The Proposed Project alignment is not located within an airport land use plan or airport safety area. The nearest private airport is the Osborne Private Airport, located approximately 400 feet north of Segment 3. The nearest airport is Baker Airport, located approximately 12 miles southwest the Proposed Project alignment.

The Proposed Project area consists primarily of creosote bush scrub and Joshua tree woodland with sparse vegetation typical of desert climates. Due to the limited amount of available fuel, the potential for wildland fires would be considered low, but fast-moving brush fires are possible.

4.9.1.2 Significance Criteria

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an impact associated with health and safety is considered significant if the Proposed Project:

- creates a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials;
- creates a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment;
- emits hazardous emissions or handles hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school;
- would be located on a site listed to have handled hazardous materials pursuant to Government Code 65962.5;
- would be located within 2 miles of a public airport or private airstrip or situated in an airport land use plan, resulting in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area;
- impairs/interferes with adopted emergency response plans or an emergency evacuation plan; or
- exposes people to hazards associated with a wildland fire.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), consideration of a significant impact on the human environment is conducted in accordance with Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.27 (specified in Section 1.2.1 Relationship to NEPA Guidelines). Following the public comment period, a finding regarding a significant impact will be prepared in accordance with this provision.

4.9.1.3 Impacts and Mitigation

The replacement segments of the fiber optic cable would be located primarily within existing dirt roads. Replacement activities would occur within existing roads and rights-of-way. There are no known health and safety risks within the Proposed Project footprint. However, potential risks to health and safety associated with worker safety and traffic diversions during the construction period may occur.

Construction activities associated with implementation of the Proposed Project would involve the use of vehicles and heavy equipment to conduct repairs of the existing fiber optic line and install new fiber optic cable. The use of vehicles and heavy equipment could result in the release of hazardous substances, such as gasoline, oil, solvents, paints, and other hazardous chemical agents.

The Project applicant would follow the Spill Prevention and Control Plan included as Appendix G - Spill Prevention and Control Plan, which outlines the storage and use of hazardous materials, the prevention of spill incidents, and emergency response procedures. The plan also describes the various chemicals to be stored and used on the Proposed Project site (i.e., fertilizers, cable lubricants, etc.). This plan establishes procedures and methods to transport, store, and clean up a spill involving hazardous materials in compliance with state and county regulations and ordinances.

Standard Occupational Safety and Health Administration safety precautions and measures would be employed during construction activities in accordance with AT&T Corp. (AT&T)'s Safety Plan, which has been included as Appendix J - Security Plan. The purpose of the plan is to establish safety standards and practices that would be implemented during construction to minimize potential health and safety impacts to workers and the public.

There are no known existing contaminated sites in the vicinity of the Proposed Project. While the project is located in a remote area and no known contaminated sites were identified, the potential for encountering previously unidentified contaminated soils or other unknown hazardous materials during trenching activities does exist. Existing contaminants, if uncovered, could pose a health issue to workers or individuals in the vicinity. The Spill Prevention and Control Plan includes measures to be taken in the event that unknown hazardous materials are uncovered and includes emergency response special handling procedures. With implementation of the Spill Prevention and Control Plan and AT&T's Safety Plan, impacts associated with hazardous materials storage, transport, and handling are expected to be less than significant.

The Proposed Project is not located within 0.25 mile of any existing or proposed schools; therefore, no impacts to schools would occur.

Although an airport is located in close proximity to Segment 3, the Proposed Project does not involve structures or equipment that could interfere with airspace, therefore, no aviation impacts would occur. The only aboveground structures that would remain in place after the completion of construction are warning marker posts, which would measure 8 feet to 16 feet above the ground surface. The markers would not be considered a hazard to aircraft.

Work would occur along road shoulders and dirt access roads, but would not impede emergency access at any location. In addition, equipment used to install and repair the fiber optic cable is highly mobile and would not be at one location for a prolonged time. Further, the roads that would be impacted by construction are not main arterials. Consequently, there would be no impact to an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.

Dry vegetation could become ignited as a result of construction activities or personnel. However, vegetation is sparse in the Proposed Project area and does not provide much fuel. A wildland fire, if it were to occur, would not likely spread to an urban or residential area; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

4.9.2 No Action Alternative

Selection of the No Action Alternative, as described in Section 2.5.1 No Action Alternative, would not result in construction of the Proposed Project; and potential effects associated with health and safety/hazardous materials as described in Section 4.9.1.3 Impacts and Mitigation would not occur.