§ 989.13 Categorical exclusion.

(a) CATEXs apply to those classes of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have potential for significant effect on the environment and do not, therefore, require further environmental analysis in an EA or an EIS. The list of Air Force-approved CATEXs is in attachment 2 of this part. Command supplements to this part may not add CATEXs or expand the scope of the CATEXs in attachment 2 of this part.

(b) Characteristics of categories of actions that usually do not require either an EIS or an EA (in the absence of extraordinary circumstances) include:

(1) Minimal adverse effect on environmental quality.

(2) No significant change to existing environmental conditions.

(3) No significant cumulative environmental impact.

(4) Socioeconomic effects only.
(5) Similarity to actions previously assessed and found to have no significant environmental impacts.

(c) CATEXs apply to actions in the United States and abroad. General exemptions specific to actions abroad are in 32 CFR Part 187. The EPF or other decision-maker forwards requests for additional exemption determinations for actions abroad to HQ USAF/CEV with a justification letter.

(d) Normally, any decision-making level may determine the applicability of a CATEX and need not formally record the determination on AF Form 813 or elsewhere, except as noted in the CATEX list.

(e) Application of a CATEX to an action does not eliminate the need to meet air conformity requirements (see § 989.28).

§989.14 Environmental assessment.

(a) When a proposed action is one not usually requiring an EIS but is not categorically excluded, the EPF must prepare an EA (40 CFR 1508.9). Every EA must lead to either a FONSI, a decision to prepare an EIS, or no decision on the proposal.

(b) Whenever a proposed action usually requires an EIS, the EPF responsible for the EIAP may prepare an EA to definitively determine if an EIS is required based on the analysis of environmental impacts. Alternatively, the EPF may choose to bypass the EA and proceed with preparation of an EIS.

(c) An EA is a written analysis that:

(1) Provides analysis sufficient to determine whether to prepare an EIS or a FONSI.

(2) Aids the Air Force in complying with the NEPA when no EIS is required.

(d) An EA discusses the need for the proposed action, reasonable alternatives

to the proposed action, the affected environment, the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives (including the "no action" alternative), and a listing of agencies and persons consulted during preparation.

(e) The format for the EA is the same as the EIS. The alternatives section of an EA and an EIS are similar and should follow the alternatives analysis guidance outlined in § 989.8.

(f) The EPF should design the EA to facilitate rapidly transforming the document into an EIS if the environmental analysis reveals a significant impact.

(g) Certain ÉAs require SAF/MIQ approval because they involve topics of special importance or interest. Unless directed otherwise by SAF/MIQ, the EPF must forward the following types of EAs to SAF/MIQ through HQ USAF/ CEV (copy to AFCEE/EC for technical review), along with an unsigned FONSI:

(1) EAs for actions where the Air Force has wetlands or floodplains compliance responsibilities (E.O. 11988 and E.O. 11990). A Finding of No Practicable Alternative (FONPA) must be submitted to HQ USAF/CEV when the alternative selected is located in wetlands or floodplains, and must discuss why no other practical alternative exists to avoid impacts. See AFI 32–7064, Integrated Resources Management. ⁸

(2) System acquisition EAs.

(3) All EAs on non-Air Force agency proposals that require an Air Force decision, such as use of Air Force property for highways and joint-use proposals.

(4) EAs for actions that require the Air Force to make conformity determinations pursuant to the Clean Air Act, as amended, and the implementing rules. Conformity determinations are made by SAF/MIQ, see § 989.28.

(5) EAs where mitigation to insignificance is accomplished in lieu of initiating an EIS (§ 989.22(c)).

(h) A few examples of actions that normally require preparation of an EA (except as indicated in the CATEX list) include:

(1) Public land withdrawals of less than 5,000 acres.

(2) Minor mission realignments and aircraft beddowns.

(3) Building construction on base within developed areas.

(4) Minor modifications to Military Operating Areas (MOA), air-to-ground weapons ranges, and military training routes. (5) Remediation of hazardous waste disposal sites.

(i) Abbreviated Environmental Assessment. In special circumstances, when the potential environmental impacts of a proposed action are clearly insignificant (as documented on AF Form 813) and none of the CATEXs in attachment 2 of this part apply, the EPF can use an abbreviated EA to assess the action. At a minimum, the abbreviated EA will consist of:

(1) AF Form 813 with attachments analyzing the environmental impacts of the proposed action and reasonable alternatives.

(2) A concise description of the affected environment.

(3) A concise FONSI (see § 989.15).

(j) The Air Force should involve environmental agencies, applicants, and the public in the preparation of EAs (40 CFR 1501.4(b)). The extent of involvement usually coincides with the magnitude and complexity of the proposed action and its potential environmental effect on the area. For proposed actions described in § 989.15(e)(2), use either the scoping process described in § 989.18 or the public notice process in § 989.23(b) and (c).

§ 989.15 Finding of no significant impact.

(a) The FONSI (40 CFR 1508.13) briefly describes why an action would not have a significant effect on the environment and thus will not be the subject of an EIS. The FONSI must summarize the EA or, preferably, have it attached and incorporated by reference, and must note any other environmental documents related to the action.

(b) If the EA is not attached, the FONSI must include:

(1) Name of the action.

(2) Brief description of the action (including alternatives considered and the chosen alternative).

(3) Brief discussion of anticipated environmental effects.

(4) Conclusions leading to the FONSI.(5) All mitigation actions that will be

adopted with implementation of the proposal (see § 989.22).

(c) Keep FONSIs as brief as possible. Most FONSIs should not exceed two typewritten pages. Stand-alone FONSIs without an attached EA may be longer.

(d) For actions of regional or local interest, disseminate the FONSI according to § 989.23. The MAJCOM and NGB are responsible for release of FONSIs to regional offices of Federal agencies, the state single point of contact (SPOC), and state agencies concurrent with local release by the installations.

⁸See footnote 1 to § 989.1.