

4.12 Utilities

This section analyzes potential impacts to existing utilities that may result from implementation of each alternative. Proposed mitigation measures to offset significant adverse impacts are outlined. Any impacts that result in the loss of accessibility for an operator to perform maintenance and emergency repairs, damage to facilities or equipment, or a disruption of service are considered significant. The potential for accidents to occur, resulting in one or more of these effects on utilities, will remain as long as vehicle and aircraft activity, military and non-military, continues in the vicinity of the utilities.

Impacts to Utilities could be considered significant if:

- ❖ the proposed project results in a substantially greater risk of accidents to the utility lines or access is blocked from regular maintenance activities.

4.12.1 Alternative I: East/West

4.12.1.1 Impacts

Utility Corridor D, containing overhead power transmission lines and underground fiber optic and gas lines, runs parallel to the southwest boundary of Alternative I for approximately 24.3 miles. Utility lines in Utility Corridor D run parallel to, but are not within, the planned training corridor, where training activities would occur. The boundary of the alternative would be 100 ft northwest of the centerline of the northernmost or westernmost utility line within the utility corridor. Military training would occur next to the power lines over a longer distance than at present. This alternative is not likely to increase the potential for military vehicle accidents with the utility lines. For a more complete discussion of airspace issues, see Sections 3.16 and 4.16.

4.12.1.2 Mitigation

The Army proposes to construct a berm and 3-strand wire fence located 500 meters inside the alternative boundary. This berm and fence would run the entire length of the maneuver training area next to the utility corridor. It would further delineate the buffer zone between training activities and the alternative boundary and would prevent nearly all potential for military ground vehicles to encroach upon the utility corridor. The Army will also place aircraft warning markers on the power transmission lines, thereby increasing the visibility of the lines and decreasing the potential for aircraft accidents. These mitigation measures would reduce the potential for vehicle and aircraft accidents with utility lines, poles, generators, and other utility infrastructure to less than significant. With the implementation of this alternative, military training will actually be a greater distance from the utility lines and be more protected due to the construction of the berm and fence than they are at present. Therefore impacts will actually be reduced from even present levels.

Although these mitigation measures will reduce the potential of training vehicle and aircraft accidents to less than significant, the potential for accidents cannot be fully eliminated as long as military and civilian vehicles and aircraft continue to operate in the vicinity.

4.12.2 Alternative II: East Gate/South

4.12.2.1 Impacts

Alternative II includes a portion of Utility Corridor D for a distance of approximately 36.4 miles and a portion of Utility Corridor Q for approximately 14.3 miles. Utility lines next to Fort Irwin Road also run parallel to the alternative boundary but are not within the planned training area. Impacts on utility lines in designated utility corridors would be the same as those discussed in Alternative I.

There are utilities in Alternative II located outside designated corridors and within the planned training area. They include a direct current (DC) grounding station with associated power lines southeast of Coyote Dry Lake and a Southern California Edison (SCE) 115-kV overhead power line just west of Coyote Dry Lake. Access to these utilities by the owner/operator would be restricted and require Army permission to enter the range.

4.12.2.2 Mitigation

Mitigation for Alternative II will be similar to that discussed in Alternative I.

The Army also proposes to construct a berm and fence around the grounding station to protect it from surrounding training activities. This is likely to decrease the potential for military vehicle accidents. The SCE overhead power line will either be relocated outside the planned training corridor next to Fort Irwin Road or buried underground. This mitigation measure will reduce the potential impacts to less than significant.

4.12.3 Alternative III: East Gate

4.12.3.1 Impacts

Alternative III includes a portion of Utility Corridor D for a distance of approximately 21.4 miles. Impacts on utility lines from this alternative would be the same as those discussed in Alternative I.

4.12.3.2 Mitigation

Mitigation for this alternative will be the same as discussed in Alternative I.

4.12.4 Alternative IV: Southwest/East Gate/UTM 90

4.12.4.1 Impacts

Impacts are expected to be the same as Alternative I.

4.12.4.2 Mitigation

Mitigation for this alternative will be the same as discussed in Alternative I.

4.12.5 Alternative V: East Gate/UTM 90

4.12.5.1 Impacts

Alternative V includes a portion of Utility Corridor D for a distance of approximately 24.3 miles. Impacts on utility lines from this alternative would be the same as those discussed in Alternative I.

4.12.5.2 Mitigation

Mitigation for this alternative will be the same as discussed in Alternative I.

4.12.6 Alternative VI: No Action

Alternative VI is not expected to impact utilities, as current operations at Fort Irwin would continue.

4.12.7 Cumulative Impacts

There are no significant cumulative impacts expected to utilities from the proposed project.

4.13 Transportation and Access

The following discussion summarizes the potential impacts on the public and military transportation systems in the study area from the proposed project alternatives. Mitigation measures proposed to offset significant adverse impacts are outlined in the respective alternative sections. Impacts from the closure of roads providing access to areas of an alternative that would be withdrawn and off limits to the public are not considered significant.

Impacts to Transportation could be considered significant if:

- ❖ long-term decrease in the level of service they provide occurs as a result of implementation of an alternative.

4.13.1 Alternative I: East/West

4.13.1.1 Impacts

National and State Highway Systems

No increases in personnel or equipment are proposed in this or any of the other alternatives. Consequently no change in current military or civilian vehicle use is planned or expected. Impacts to national and state highways near Fort Irwin are not expected from implementation of this alternative. The potential exists for dust generated in training activities to blow over State Highway (SH) 127, thereby decreasing visibility and increasing the risk of slowing traffic and accidents. If dust clouds from training activities decrease the level of service on SH 127, then a potentially significant impact to transportation would result.

No change in the level of military and civilian vehicle use is planned or expected on Fort Irwin Road, Irwin Road, or the Manix Trail. There are three proposed under-crossings for rotational training vehicles so that the military vehicles are not crossing Fort Irwin Road and impacting