



**CEQA EXEMPTION / NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM (rev. 06/2022)**

Project Information

Project Name (if applicable): Mono Lake Avalanche Emergency Repair

DIST-CO-RTE: 09-MNO-395

PM/PM: 53.0/53.5

EA: 09-39830

Federal-Aid Project Number: N/A

Project Description

This Caltrans Emergency Project was conducted to address damage from a series of avalanches that carried debris from the hillside affected by the 2016 Marina Fire on U.S. 395 along Mono Lake, between Lee Vining and Mono City. The avalanches took place between 2/25/2023 and 2/28/2023 at postmile 53.0/53.5 and resulted in a full closure of the highway through the project area. Work started on 3/7/2023, but was periodically halted due to avalanche danger. *(Continued on Continuation Sheet, Page 3)*

Caltrans CEQA Determination (Check one)

- Not Applicable** – Caltrans is not the CEQA Lead Agency
- Not Applicable** – Caltrans has prepared an IS or EIR under CEQA

Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, the project is:

- Exempt by Statute.** (PRC 21080[b]; 14 CCR 15260 et seq.)
- Categorically Exempt. Class** Enter class. (PRC 21084; 14 CCR 15300 et seq.)
 - No exceptions apply that would bar the use of a categorical exemption (PRC 21084 and 14 CCR 15300.2). See the [SER Chapter 34](#) for exceptions.
- Covered by the Common Sense Exemption.** This project does not fall within an exempt class, but it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR 15061[b][3].)

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Cecilia Boudreau

Cecilia Boudreau

10/16/2023

Print Name

Signature

Date

Project Manager

Jeremy Milos

[Signature]

10/17/23

Print Name

Signature

Date



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Caltrans NEPA Determination (Check one)

Not Applicable

Caltrans has determined that this project has no significant impacts on the environment as defined by NEPA, and that there are no unusual circumstances as described in 23 CFR 771.117(b). See SER Chapter 30 for unusual circumstances. As such, the project is categorically excluded from the requirements to prepare an EA or EIS under NEPA and is included under the following:

23 USC 326: Caltrans has been assigned, and hereby certifies that it has carried out the responsibility to make this determination pursuant to 23 USC 326 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated April 18, 2022, executed between FHWA and Caltrans. Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under:

- 23 CFR 771.117(c): activity (c)(9)
23 CFR 771.117(d): activity (d)(Enter activity number)
Activity Enter activity number listed in Appendix A of the MOU between FHWA and Caltrans

23 USC 327: Based on an examination of this proposal and supporting information, Caltrans has determined that the project is a Categorical Exclusion under 23 USC 327. The environmental review, consultation, and any other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by Caltrans pursuant to 23 USC 327 and the Memorandum of Understanding dated May 27, 2022, and executed by FHWA and Caltrans.

Senior Environmental Planner or Environmental Branch Chief

Cecilia Boudreau
Signature: Cecilia Boudreau
Date: 10/16/2023

Project Manager/ DLA Engineer

Jeremy Mios
Signature: [Handwritten Signature]
Date: 10/17/23

Date of Categorical Exclusion Checklist completion (if applicable): N/A
Date of Environmental Commitment Record or equivalent: N/A

Briefly list environmental commitments on continuation sheet if needed (i.e., not necessary if included on an attached ECR). Reference additional information, as appropriate (e.g., additional studies and design conditions).



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Continuation sheet:

Project Description

(Continued from Page 1)

These avalanches covered approximately ½ mile of highway, 30-40 feet deep. The avalanche debris included snow, ice, Anchor-wire mesh and fencing, guardrail, rock, trees, gravel, damaged road, and vegetation. To clear and repair this avalanche area, Caltrans issued a \$1 million emergency contract with Qualcon, Contractors, Inc. (Qualcon).

Work involved the removal and disposal of snow/avalanche slide debris, and repair of damaged highway appurtenances including guardrail, pavement, rock fencing, k-rail, signs, etc., as necessary to restore the highway to pre-slide conditions. Caltrans and Qualcon coordinated with partners at the National Weather Service in Reno to schedule the repairs considering additional forecasted weather events. All Caltrans and Qualcon staff went through avalanche safety training prior to working onsite. All equipment staging was done on the paved surfaces of US 395 within the area closed to traffic.

The communities of Mono City, Virginia Creek, Bridgeport, Pickle Meadows, and Bridgeport Indian Colony were without power for varying lengths of time due to damaged Southern California Edison infrastructure that was damaged by numerous avalanche slides in the area during heavy winter storms. Essential public and emergency services were not able to access these communities via US 395 due to avalanche slides to the north and south of these communities. The project was necessary to restore access to these communities to prevent or mitigate loss of, or damage to, life, health, property, or essential public services.

On 4/5/2023, enough work was complete to reopen the highway safely. On 4/7/2023, most of the work was complete but a lot of the area was still under multiple feet of snow. Qualcon demobilized and returned to the area on 5/12 to assess additional cleanup and debris removal items that were exposed after the snow melted. Final cleanup of project area was completed on 5/19.

All work was performed within Caltrans right-of-way and in a manner that substantially conforms to the preexisting design, function, and location as the original facility. With the incorporation of Caltrans Standard Specifications, Environmental specialists have determined that the project had no effect to Environmental resources.