

## Categorical Exclusions: Introduction

CATHY: Welcome to the "NEPA Categorical Exclusions" course. This is another in our series of online NEPA courses and resources, and I want to be sure that you've got all the materials that you need before starting on this course.

First of all, you will need your participant guide. You will need your BLM 2008 NEPA Handbook, and then you will need at least one categorical exclusion that either you've done or somebody else in your office has done, and then, of course, you will need something to write with.

If you don't have a copy of either the handbook or the participant guide or both, then all you need to do is go to the resources tab, which is on the left side of your screen, and just download them before moving on.

So I want to take a moment to talk about how to take an online course. These tips can be found if you look at page 2 of your participant guide. You can follow along. Now, obviously, it's different to take an online course compared to a classroom course. One of my favorite things about taking online courses is that you have control over your learning environment. You have control over the day you take the class. You have control of the time of day. You've got control over how long you participate and to some extent with whom you watch it.

Let's talk about the learning environment. You know, if you are watching it with a group of people, you will probably be in a conference room. If you are watching it all by yourself, you might be at your desk or you might be at home. And regardless of whether you are at home or with a group, you want to make sure that everybody around you knows that you are taking class and you are not to be bothered. So you need to turn off all your cell phones. Turn off all your distractions. Put up a do not disturb sign. You know, get comfortable. Make sure that you can see and hear the screen. Use headphones if you are by yourself so that you can avoid bothering your neighbors.

And then if you are watching with a group of people, please try and keep your conversations to a minimum, your side conversations. You might not be interested about what we are saying. You might already know what we are talking about, but the person next to you that you are talking to might really be interested. So shh!

Be sure to pick a day and time of day when you are fresh and alert because this can be kind of complicated, kind of heavy. So we want your mind to be sharp.

And if you miss a little something, all you've got to do is just stop the video and watch it again. If you need to think about something that you heard, stop the video. Think about it. That's the beauty of this online learning. You have control.

All right. Let's get started. This course is based on Chapter 4 of your BLM NEPA Handbook. It's called, Categorical Exclusions. In the BLM, we call categorical exclusions CXs. It's kind a mouthful. We call them CXs. Other agencies might refer to them as CEs, CatExs. It's all the same thing, but we'll mostly talk about them as CXs.

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So the instructors are going to discuss what a CX is, where you can find the CX lists, how to determine if extraordinary circumstances apply, and then how to document a CX. We have included a few exercises, of course, so that we can reinforce these concepts.

Now, our course objectives for today are, when you complete this course, you should be able to determine whether an action is categorically excluded. You should be able to determine whether extraordinary circumstances apply, and you should be able to prepare appropriate documentation.

Now, we are fortunate that all three of our instructors here, they helped develop this BLM NEPA Handbook. So they know what it says and why.

First of all, I would like to introduce you to Meagan. Meagan Conry, she's our district planning and environmental coordinator for the Roseburg District in Oregon. She's been with the BLM since 2004. She started her career in the Washington office. Great to have you, Meagan.

MEAGAN: Thanks, Cathy. I'm excited to be here.

CATHY: And then we've got Jolie Pollet. She's a planning and environmental coordinator for the BLM's Alaska state office. She's been with the BLM since 1998, and prior to being in Alaska, she worked for the BLM in Oregon and Utah. Jolie, nice to see you.

JOLIE: Hi, Cathy.

CATHY: Richard Hardt is an ecologist for the Eugene District in Oregon. He's been with the BLM since 1994, and he's worked on some aspect of NEPA since then. We are glad to have you with us.

RICHARD: Thanks, Cathy. It's a pleasure to be here.

CATHY: I would like to thank our instructors for being here today, and it's time to get started.