



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) invites comments on the following information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by **[60 DAYS FROM DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER.]**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas P. Dickson, Acting Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1522, Room 5164, South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-4492 or email Thomas.dickson@wdc.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) regulation (5 CFR 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) requires that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities (see 5 CFR 1320.8(d)). This notice identifies an information collection that RUS is submitting to OMB for revision.

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether

the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments may be sent to: Thomas P. Dickson, Acting Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 1522, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-4492 or email: thomas.dickson@wdc.usda.gov.

Title: Electric System Emergency Restoration Plan.

OMB Control Number: 0572-0140.

Type of Request: Revision of a currently approved collection.

Abstract: USDA Rural Development administers rural utilities programs through the Rural Utilities Service (Agency). The Agency manages loan programs in accordance with the Rural Electrification Act (RE Act) of 1936, 7 U.S.C. 901 et seq., as amended. One of the Agency's main objectives is to safeguard loan security. An important part of safeguarding loan security is to make sure Agency financed facilities are utilized responsibly, adequately operated and adequately maintained. Accordingly, RUS borrowers have a duty to RUS to maintain their respective systems. In performing this duty, borrowers further the purposes of the RE Act while also preserving the value of electric systems to serve as collateral for repayment of RUS assistance.

A substantial portion of the electric infrastructure of the United States resides in rural America and is maintained by rural Americans. RUS is uniquely coupled with the electric infrastructure of rural America and its electric borrowers serving rural America. To ensure that the electric infrastructure in rural America is adequately protected, electric borrowers conduct a Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (VRA) of their respective systems and utilize the results of this assessment to enhance an existing Emergency Restoration Plan (ERP) or to create an ERP. The VRA is utilized to identify specific assets and infrastructure owned or served by the electric utility, to determine the criticality and the risk level associated with the assets and infrastructure including a risk versus cost analysis, to identify threats and vulnerabilities, if present, to review existing mitigation procedures and to assist in the development of new and additional mitigating procedures, if necessary. The ERP provides written procedures detailing response and restoration efforts in the event of a major system outage resulting from a natural or man-made disaster. The annual exercise of the ERP ensures operability and employee competency and serves to identify and correct deficiencies in the existing ERP. The exercise may be implemented individually by a single borrower, or by an individual borrower as a participant in a multi-party (to include utilities, government agencies and other participants or combination thereof) tabletop execution or actual implementation of the ERP.

Electric borrowers maintain ERPs as part of prudent utilities practices. These ERPs are essential to continuous operation of the electric systems. Each electric borrower provides RUS with an annual self-certification that an ERP exists for the system and that an initial VRA has been performed.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average .5 hour per response.

Respondents: Not-for-profit institutions.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 625.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 313 hours.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Thomas P. Dickson, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, at (202) 690-4492, or email: thomas.dickson@wdc.usda.gov.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the requests for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Christopher A. McLean
Acting Administrator
Rural Utilities Service

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