



[6450-01-P]

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

U.S. Energy Information Administration

Agency Information Collection Proposed New Survey OR Extension

AGENCY: U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Department of Energy (DOE).

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: EIA is requesting a three-year extension of EIA-882T, “Generic Clearance for Questionnaire Testing, Evaluation, and Research.” EIA-882T provides EIA with the authority to utilize qualitative and quantitative methodologies to pretest questionnaires and validate the quality of data collected on EIA’s surveys. EIA uses EIA-882T to meet its obligation to publish, and otherwise make available independent, high-quality statistical data to federal government agencies, state and local governments, the energy industry, researchers, and the general public.

DATES: EIA must receive all comments on this proposed information collection no later than **[INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*]**. If you anticipate any difficulties in submitting your comments by the deadline, contact the person listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice as soon as possible.

ADDRESSES: Send your comments to Brian Hewitt, U.S. Energy Information Administration, 1000 Independence Avenue SW, EI-21 Washington, DC 20585. If you prefer, you can e-mail them to: brian.hewitt@eia.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you need additional information, send your request to Brian Hewitt, U.S. Energy Information Administration, 1000 Independence Avenue SW EI-21, Washington, DC 20585. If you prefer, you can e-mail brian.hewitt@eia.gov or contact him by telephone at 202-586-5045.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This information collection request contains:

(1) *OMB No.:* 1905-0186

(2) *Information Collection Request Title:* Generic Clearance for Questionnaire Testing, Evaluation, and Research;

(3) *Type of Request:* Renewal;

(4) *Purpose:* The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) is requesting a three-year approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to utilize qualitative and quantitative methodologies to pretest questionnaires and validate the quality of the data that is collected on EIA and DOE survey forms. Through the use of these methodologies, EIA will conduct research studies to improve the quality of energy data being collected, reduce or minimize survey respondent burden, and increase agency efficiency. This authority would also allow EIA to improve data collection in order to meet the needs of EIA's customers while also staying current in the evolving nature of the energy industry.

The specific methods proposed for the coverage by this clearance are described below.

Also outlined is the legal authority for these voluntary information gathering activities.

The following methods are proposed:

Pilot Surveys. Pilot surveys conducted under this clearance will generally be methodological studies, and will always employ statistically representative samples. The

pilot surveys will replicate all components of the methodological design, sampling procedures (where possible), and questionnaires of the full scale survey. Pilot surveys will normally be utilized when EIA undertakes a complete redesign of a particular data collection methodology or when EIA undertakes data collection in new energy areas, such as HGL production, alternative fueled motor vehicles, and other emerging areas of the energy sector where data collection would provide utility to EIA.

Cognitive Interviews. Cognitive interviews are typically one-on-one interviews in which the respondent is usually asked to "think aloud" or is asked "retrospective questions" as he or she answers questions, reads survey materials, defines terminology, or completes other activities as part of a typical survey process. A number of different techniques may be involved including, asking respondents what specific words or phrases mean or asking respondents probing questions to determine how they estimate, calculate, or determine specific data elements on a survey. The objectives of these cognitive interviews are to identify problems of ambiguity or misunderstanding, examine the process that respondents follow for reporting information, assess survey respondents' ability to report new information, or identify other difficulties respondents have answering survey questions in order to reduce measurement error from estimates based on a survey.

Respondent Debriefings. Respondent debriefings conducted under this clearance will generally be methodological or cognitive research studies. The debriefing form is administered after a respondent completes a questionnaire either in paper format, electronically, or through in-person interviews. The debriefings contain probing questions to determine how respondents interpret the survey questions, how much time and effort was spent completing the questionnaire, and whether they have problems in

completing the survey/questionnaire. Respondent debriefings also are useful in determining potential issues with data quality and in estimating respondent burden.

Usability Testing. Usability tests are similar to cognitive interviews in which a respondent is typically asked to “think aloud” or asked “retrospective questions” as he or she reviews an electronic questionnaire, website, visual aid, or hard copy survey form. The objective of usability testing is to check that respondents can easily and intuitively navigate electronic survey collection programs, websites, and other survey instruments to submit their data to EIA.

Focus Groups. Focus groups, in person or online, involve group sessions guided by a moderator who follows a topic guide containing questions or subjects focused on a particular issue rather than adhering to a standardized cognitive interview protocol. Focus groups are useful for exploring issues concerning the design of a form and the meaning of terms from a specific group of respondents, data users, or other stakeholders of EIA data.

(5) *Annual Estimated Number of Respondents:* 1,870;

(6) *Annual Estimated Number of Total Responses:* 1,870;

(7) *Annual Estimated Number of Burden Hours:* 1,915;

(8) *Annual Estimated Reporting and Recordkeeping Cost Burden:* There are no additional costs associated with these survey methods other than the burden hours. The information is maintained in the normal course of business. The annual cost in burden hours to the respondents is estimated to be \$144,946 (1,915 burden hours times \$75.69 per hour), which represents a reduction of 85 burden hours from the prior renewal of this collection. Therefore, other than the cost of burden hours, EIA estimates that there are no additional costs for generating, maintaining, and providing the information.

Comments are invited on whether or not: (a) The proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of agency functions, including whether the information will have a practical utility; (b) EIA's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used, is accurate; (c) EIA can improve the quality, utility, and clarity of the information it will collect; and (d) EIA can minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, such as automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Statutory Authority: Section 13(b) of the Federal Energy Administration Act of 1974, Pub. L. 93-275, codified as 15 U.S.C. 772(b) and the DOE Organization Act of 1977, Pub. L. 95-91, codified at 42 U.S.C. 7101 et seq.

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Office of Survey Development and Statistical Integration,
U. S. Energy Information Administration.

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