

June 26, 2008

Mr. Nathan Frey
Department of Energy Desk Officer
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, DC 20503

SUBJECT: DOE-887(78), "USE OF GENERIC CLEARANCE FOR THE ENERGY INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION'S WEB SITE CUSTOMER SURVEY"

Dear Mr. Frey:

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) plans to use the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved generic clearance, DOE-887, (DOE Customer Surveys' OMB No. 1901-0302, expiring 10/31/2009), to conduct a short survey of EIA's website customers. Your action is anticipated within two weeks; however, EIA will not conduct this survey without approval. Results of this data collection will be submitted in the annual report of surveys conducted under the generic clearance.

EIA conducted similar web-based surveys in 2006 and 2007, which provided significant useful feedback. Based in part on the feedback, the EIA home page was redesigned and launched in January 2008. The new home page provides users with an improved layout that helps them see what is available on the site. We added a new A-Z search function that allows customers to find what they are looking for alphabetically (helping those who said they had trouble with the navigation), and a dynamic featured content area at the top of the page to highlight timely and valuable information.

Other new features on the site include the Country Energy Profiles with energy information by country, a "Most Requested" section for popular reports, and a special section for Basic Information, something users have indicated in the surveys that they would like. Our new Energy In Brief series launched in April 2008 directly responds to user requests for short, easy-to-read articles. The results of previous surveys were invaluable in leading EIA to change and improve its navigation, web content and presentation, and electronic delivery of energy information.

The number of customers using EIA's website has increased rapidly each year. During the first six months of 2008, visits to our site averaged over two million customers per month. With the move to nearly 100 percent electronic dissemination of information, EIA has responded to the growth in electronic customers, and the increased focus on electronic government, and realizes that the design and functionality of a government statistical website has become more critical. Customers including policy-makers, business and financial markets, the energy industry and other businesses, academia, the

media, and private citizens all rely on energy information from EIA that they can easily access, understand, and is of current interest.

For the survey in 2008, EIA plans to keep some of the valuable standard questions we asked in previous years, but will also ask some new questions to collect information essential to understanding its customers. The survey this year has 12 questions, some with follow-up. Depending upon answers, some respondents could have a maximum of 18 questions.

The questions are organized in three sections: two demographic questions at the beginning, five questions (some with possible follow-ups, described below) about or related to our website, and the remaining questions about our customer service, EIA's public image, the customer's energy literacy, and an open-ended question intended to provide feedback to EIA.

The questions to be asked are:

1. Which category best describes you or your organization?
2. Do you live in the United States?
3. How often do you visit EIA's site?
4. How satisfied are you with the quality of the information on EIA's site? (If they rate the quality 4 or below, meaning they are not satisfied, we ask a follow-up question "Why are you not satisfied?")
- *5. What task were you doing when you visited EIA's site today?
6. What information were you looking for?
7. Did you find the information you were looking for? (If they said they did find the information they needed, a follow-up question asks if the level of detail was ok for them. If they did not find the information, a follow-up question asks if they considered calling or emailing EIA for help.)
- *8. Have you ever contacted EIA directly, either by telephone or email, looking for information? (If they answer other than "no," two follow-up questions ask how they found the contact information and if they were satisfied with the customer service they received.)
- *9. What other energy site(s) do you use besides EIA's?
- *10. Based on what you saw on our site, on other energy sites, or just on what you know about energy...
The largest share of U.S. imported oil comes from _____? (After they select an answer, a follow-up question tells them the correct answer and probes for how they came up with their answer.)*11. How do you perceive EIA? (This is an image and marketing question to see how they perceive our organization; the answers are a list of adjectives where they can select all that apply.)
12. Anything else you want to tell us?

* = New questions added from the 2007 EIA website survey.

After the customer hits the "submit" button, the following comment will appear: "If you

are interested in being involved in future efforts to help improve the EIA website and products, contact Colleen Blessing at colleen.blessing@eia.doe.gov.”

Rationale and Use of Data from the New Questions

For Question 5: EIA seeks direct responses from customers about how they use EIA information. EIA has anecdotal information about customer tasks and needs, but nothing measurable collected directly from them.

For Question 8: EIA has a contact center and experts whom people can contact for information and help using the website. EIA wants to know how frequently customers get frustrated or give up looking on the website and then call or email instead. Talking on the phone and answering emails is time consuming and labor intensive. Determining where customers have trouble and what they were looking for when they decided to call us will enable EIA to make improvements and help customers find the information they need on their own. These improvements are intended to reduce the number of calls and emails.

For Question 9: EIA would like to know what other energy websites customers use so EIA can compare and possibly use best practices to improve its own site.

For Question 10: One of EIA’s three missions is public understanding and education. EIA is uncertain what level of understanding its customers have about basic energy issues and trends. This question addresses a critical aspect of the energy situation and is a measure for depth of understanding of energy issues. Based on usability testing and informal polling, we find that most people think they know the correct answer, but, in fact, they do not. If most respondents select the wrong answer or say they don’t know the answer to this question, EIA will use that finding to make improvements in its basic energy information and will provide new, easy-to-understand products in an appropriate place on our website such as a consumer-oriented portal.

For Question 11: This is a variation of a standard image question often asked in focus groups. “What words would you use to describe EIA?” We have selected adjectives customers have used to describe EIA in narrative sections of previous surveys. Audience research will enable EIA to understand how it is viewed by customers, and to target changes to products and marketing strategies.

The medium for administration of this survey will be the website itself. EIA has created an electronic survey form (HTML document with the questions is attached) that will be posted on the EIA website, allowing customers to easily and automatically submit their feedback. After the customer visits the EIA website and then closes their browser, the short survey will appear on the screen, with a “close” button at the top if they don’t want to complete the survey. The 12-question survey (not including the possible follow-up questions) is expected to fit on three computer screens. A relatively short survey will encourage participation.

EIA plans to have this survey on the website for three weeks, or until 5,000 responses are received. The number of returns will be monitored each day. If the goal of 5,000 responses is not reached in the three-week period, the survey will remain on the EIA website for a few days longer.

Because EIA does not have a list or frame of its website customers, EIA cannot designate a scientific sample, although direct input from customers is needed. We do expect responses from a diverse group of customers, based on the fact that past surveyed customers represented a diverse group, and due to the sheer volume of input from previous surveys.

While the responses to this survey cannot be claimed as being representative of all users, EIA will get an understanding of users' opinions by obtaining consistent information from a large number of users. During the survey period, EIA can compute a proxy response rate by: survey responses/unique web customers per day, although like for most web surveys, the actual response percentage is expected to be very small.

All participation in this survey is voluntary. No self-identification information will be requested. All results will be presented in aggregate form. Subsequent analysis of the data collected will limit any divulgence of individual customer responses.

The attached survey will take about four minutes to complete, based on tests with sample participants. The burden for the targeted customer group should not exceed 333 hours (5,000 potential respondents multiplied by 4 minutes each).

Colleen Blessing, EIA's User Experience Advisor, is the point of contact for questions and may be reached at 202-586-6482. Other questions should be directed to Grace Sutherland at 202-586-6264.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Brown
Director
Statistics and Methods Group
Energy Information Administration