

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

B1. Description of Respondent Universe

Respondents to Schedule A will be a census of all 500 active natural gas processing plant operators in the United States. Respondents to standby Schedule B would be selected from those companies in the frame that are affected by the supply disruption. The selection of respondents to Schedule B, the frequency of the survey submissions, and the corresponding reporting due-date, will be determined at the time Schedule B is activated in response to the supply emergency. Factors that will be considered in developing the identifying respondents include: the geographic location of the supply emergency, the size and number of processing plants in the supply disruption area, and the utility of the information vis-à-vis the U.S. natural gas delivery system and the burden to respondents.

The list of needed respondents to Schedule B would be determined at the time the Schedule is activated in response to a natural gas supply disruption.

B2.1 Data Aggregation Procedures

Natural gas processing plant operators would be asked to submit summary information about their processing plant operations, internal and external plant constraints or damage, and expected time for recovery of plant operations. Data will be aggregated by region. EIA has an established procedure for both follow-up of non-respondents and for verification of data filed. Data will be reviewed and checked for mathematical consistency. EIA will apply appropriate statistical techniques to the processed data to estimate total processing plant capabilities, operating levels, and measures of plant damage and restoration schedule. EIA would publish aggregate information only. Company-specific data will be protected and not released to the public, as described in A10.

B2.2 Revisions

Revisions will be included in the next release of the status report. A revised submission is required if actual or corrected data vary more than plus or minus four percent from the data previously reported.

B2.3 Security

Several steps have been taken to assure protection and security of respondent data and estimates during data processing and report preparation. One example is that respondent data can be submitted using the secure file transfer (SFT) e-mail system to EIA. SFT is based on the secure hypertext transfer protocol (HTTPS), an industry standard method to send information over the web using a secure, encrypted process. All information is protected by 128-bit encryption to maintain the privacy and protection of transmitted data. See Section A10 for a discussion on protection of the data.

B3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates

Form EIA-757 would be collected under EIA's mandatory data collection authority. Response to EIA's surveys is typically very high. To maximize response rates, the form was designed for ease of completion, and instructions are written in a clear and concise manner to make them easily understood. Potential respondents reviewed the form, which was modified based on respondent feedback.

Schedule A forms would be mailed as early as possible to maximize the time that respondents have to complete the survey. It is expected that Schedule A will collect data no more frequently than once every three years unless there is a supply disruption. Also, the forms and instructions would be available from EIA's Internet site to replace any lost materials. Survey non-respondents are contacted by telephone to discuss the requirement to file and any problems or questions that are delaying filing. Follow-up letters regarding the failure to file may also be mailed to non-respondents. If necessary, non-respondents would be contacted by telephone calls and letters. Every effort would be made to assist respondents in completing the survey and submitting it in a timely manner.

B4. Tests

Development of this new survey was made by the EIA staff in conjunction with discussions with industry representatives and consultations through the Federal Register notice discussed earlier. These actions served as a test of the availability of data, the extent of the burden to respondents and the clarity of instructions of the survey form.

B5. Contacts

For additional information concerning the survey design, please contact Barbara Mariner-Volpe at (202) 586-5878. For more information regarding the approval request, please contact Grace Sutherland at (202) 586-6264.