

DOE CUSTOMER SURVEYS SUPPORTING STATEMENT

DOE-887, OMB No. 1901-0302

Introduction:

The Department of Energy (DOE) requests a three-year extension from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) of the generic clearance to conduct customer surveys. The focus will be to contact users of DOE products or other services and individuals or businesses in partnership agreements with the Department to determine their needs, and how the Department can improve its products and services to better meet these needs. The surveys will be conducted by various components of the Department with support from the Energy Information Administration. Customer information is needed to make DOE products and services more effective, efficient, and less costly. Both quantitative and qualitative studies will be undertaken. The objective of quantitative studies is to ask "questions concerning satisfaction with timeliness, courtesy, accuracy and other particular aspects of the agency's operations." Examples of qualitative studies are "a focus group of customers assembled to discuss a specific set of questions" and "a cognitive laboratory experiment that asks volunteer subjects to tell what they think about a product or service."

The OMB Manual, "Resource Manual for Customer Surveys," was used as a guide in preparing this Supporting Statement and for reference during development of the customer surveys. Both Executive Order 12862 and the Manual are referenced during development of the Department's customer surveying efforts and the Department's activities are conducted consistent with the guidelines set forth in each.

DOE provides the framework for a comprehensive and balanced national energy plan through the coordination and administration of the energy functions of the Federal Government. The Department is responsible for long-term, high-risk research and development of energy technologies; the marketing of Federal power; energy conservation; the nuclear weapons program; energy regulatory programs; and a central energy data collection and analysis program. In partnership with our customers, the Department is entrusted to contribute to the welfare of the Nation by providing the technical information and scientific and educational foundation for technology, policy, and institutional leadership necessary to achieve efficiency in energy use; diversity in energy sources; a more productive and competitive economy; improved environmental quality; and a secure national defense. DOE is customer-oriented:

- _ Our decisions and actions are responsive to the customers' needs.
- _ We foster a participatory manner of doing business where the opinions and input of diverse stakeholders are sought and considered early in the decision-making process.
- _ Programs and solutions to major issues are developed in a proactive way with our customers and stakeholders.

A. Justification

1. Legal Authority

The authority for the voluntary customer surveys is P.L. No. 103-62, Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. "The purposes of this Act are to:...(3) Improve Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction; and (4) Help Federal managers improve service delivery, by requiring that they plan for meeting program objectives and by providing them with information about program results and service quality.

In addition, Executive Order 12862, "Setting Customer Service Standards," signed September 11, 1993, was aimed at:

"Ensuring that the Federal Government provides the highest quality service possible to the American people." The Executive Order establishes an explicit goal for the quality of service--"Customer service equal to the best in business." That is--"The highest quality of service delivered to customers by private organizations providing a comparable or analogous service."

The activities conducted under this clearance are designed to gather and measure customer satisfaction of the Department's programs and services and satisfy the requirements and the spirit of the Executive Order.

2. Uses of Data

If the customer surveys were not conducted, the Department would not be able to meet the requirements of Executive Order 12862 nor would the Department have information essential to providing excellent services to the American public.

Surveys will be conducted in an effort to provide additional details on 'who' customers are, what kind and quality of services they desire, and their level of satisfaction with our current products and services. During the past 3 years, DOE used telephone surveys, world-wide web surveys, and questionnaires to collect data on customer satisfaction. Customer comments receive management attention and are given high priority. DOE has developed service standards which have been published. The customer surveys serve to develop benchmarks to measure our customer service performance.

The data are used to assist the Department in satisfying its customers' needs. The information collected is analyzed to determine areas important to our customers, assess our performance in these areas, and to develop strategies to better meet customer expectations. As a customer and performance-driven organization, the data EIA derived from the customer surveys are being used in the strategic planning process and by the Performance Measures Committee to see how we are doing. Results are shared throughout the Department, with other agencies in seminars, and through presentations at meetings, such as the American Statistical Association's Committee on Energy Statistics.

The data from the customer surveys are used in conjunction with data from other sources, surveys of employees, input from management, agency audits, performance reviews, and complaint and suggestion systems. Management has been and continues to be very supportive of our customer service efforts. Management continues to focus on the 12 Steps outlined in the Resource Manual and attempts are made to meet each one. Attachment A contains examples of DOE Customer Surveys conducted during the past three years.

For each information collection that the Department undertakes under this generic clearance, we will notify OMB, at least two weeks in advance, and provide officials with a summary of objectives, specific burden estimates, and all final or near final survey instruments (focus group scripts, test questions, etc.) covered by the generic clearance for inclusion in the OMB public docket prior to their use. DOE will wait for approval from OMB before conducting a survey, with anticipation of approval within a two-weeks time period.

Before any proposal is forwarded to OMB, an adequate internal review will be conducted to ensure that the Paperwork Reduction Act rules are carried out, along with an evaluation of the proposed survey. Energy Information Administration (EIA) program specialists will be provided copies of the proposed survey for review and comment. EIA will verify that the material submitted to OMB is accurate, timely, and complete. Copies will be provided to appropriate contacts throughout the Department for their review and comment.

EIA's Statistics and Methods Group will prepare an annual progress report summarizing actual burden, reporting results achieved, and any problems or revisions needed to the basic clearance agreement.

3. Technological Considerations to Reduce Burden

Improved information technology will be used when possible to reduce the burden on the public. One of the goals of this effort is to obtain the information required with a minimum amount of burden on the public. The information will be gathered through personal or telephone interviews, focus groups, mail questionnaires, and using the Internet. In the past three years, the number of DOE customers obtaining information by electronic means (world-wide-web) continued to increase. EIA staff are involved continually with Census and BLS staff and in conferences discussing how the agencies can implement new technologies to improve surveying techniques.

In addition, the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA) requires agencies to allow individuals, or entities that deal with the agencies, the option to submit information or transact with the agency electronically and to maintain records electronically, when practicable. This option will provide us an opportunity to improve customer service and government efficiency through the use of information technology.

4a. Efforts to Identify Duplication

This effort does not duplicate any other survey being done by DOE or other Federal agencies. Other Federal agencies are conducting customer surveys, but are not soliciting comments on the usefulness of DOE products and services. This effort does involve contacts with other agencies, especially OMB, Commerce Department, and the Social Security Administration.

4b. Analysis of Similar, Existing Information

The National Institute of Standards and Technology provided us with copies of their three-year clearance package for Customer Satisfaction-related Data Collections. Phyllis Boyd and Linda Engelmeier at NIST, Commerce, have been very helpful to EIA in the Customer Service area.

5. Provisions for Reducing Burden on Small Businesses

One of the main purposes of this effort is to gather information needed without putting significant additional burden on small businesses. Small samples will be used to select respondents, and the number of questions on the surveys will be kept to a minimum. However, small businesses, as well as the agency, will benefit by the government's increased responsiveness to their needs. The use of the website for conducting customer surveys should reduce the average respondent cost.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Reporting

Without this information collection, DOE would not be able to determine the kind and quality of service customers' desire, their level of satisfaction, or ways in which to improve customer service. In addition, the Department would not be able to meet the requirements of Executive Order 12862.

7. Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.5

The Department will adhere to all the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5. Efforts are taken to make sure surveys conducted under this generic clearance are the least burdensome, are not duplicative, and have practical utility.

8. Consultations Outside the Agency

DOE has consulted with and/or received relevant materials from several agencies, including Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Management and Budget, Commerce (National Institute of Standards and Technology); Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Department of Justice, and the Social Security Administration. A *Federal Register* Notice (74 FR 19547, dated April 29, 2009) was published soliciting comments. No comments were received.

DOE/EIA staff will continue to review pertinent literature and seek advice from academia,

industry, and others on conducting customer surveys

9. Remuneration

There are no plans to provide any payment or gift to respondents. When focus groups gather for meetings, or cognitive interview participants come to the lab, they may be paid for incidental out-of-pocket expenses, but no more than \$50. Without this, it would be difficult to achieve appropriate and adequate participation and response and to obtain reliable information. Any remuneration plan for a specific collection will be discussed in the materials sent to OMB for that collection. During the past three years the response rates for the customer surveys were excellent. In past training, an instructor acknowledged the benefits of remuneration in some types of surveys. So far, remuneration is unnecessary, and we have no plans to request OMB approval to pay for respondent participation.

10. Provisions Regarding Confidentiality

Response to customer surveys is voluntary. The information reported on the customer surveys Form DOE-887 will be protected and not disclosed to the public to the extent that it satisfies the criteria for exemption under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. §552, the Department of Energy (DOE) regulations, 10 C.F.R. §1004.11, implementing the FOIA, and the Trade Secrets Act, 18 U.S.C. §1905.

Customer surveys are conducted in various forms (e.g., mail/phone/internet surveys, focus groups, and even one-on-one interviews). Individual responses are used to generate statistics on customer satisfaction and the individual responses are also used to identify specific improvements and changes to be considered for DOE products and services. Information about the respondents may be used in the analyses (e.g., responses by important stakeholders may be flagged for special consideration). The statistics, as well as specific suggestions/comments, are used for agency program planning and management.

11. Questions of a Sensitive Nature

The questions used on the survey will not be of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimate of Respondent Burden (Annualized) and Cost to Respondents

The annual respondent burden is estimated to be 12,500 hours. [50,000 respondents x 1 report x .25 hours (15 min.) = 12,500 burden hours]

13. Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents

There is no (a) capital and start-up cost component or (b) an operation and maintenance and purchase of services component associated with the customer surveys.

At 12,500 hours, the cost to all respondents to the customer surveys would be \$781,250. At

15 minutes per response and \$62.50 per hour, the cost would be \$15.63 per respondent.

An average cost per hour of \$62.50 is used because that is the average loaded (salary plus benefits) cost for an EIA employee. EIA assumes that the survey respondent workforce completing surveys for EIA is comparable with the EIA workforce.

14. Annualized Cost

The cost to the Federal Government is estimated at \$200,000.

15. Summary of Changes in Respondent Burden

There is no change in burden.

16. Schedule of Data Collection and Publication

Specific customer surveys will be submitted to OMB for review. DOE will not conduct the survey without approval (approximately 2 weeks). The results will be used by DOE to analyze customer satisfaction and to make improvements. Papers may be written and presented at public meetings or published in service reports or policy guidelines.

17. Expiration Date

There are no plans to request an exemption from OMB to not display the expiration date.

18. Exception to the Certification Statement

DOE is not requesting an exception to the certification requirements.