



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Office of the Chief Information Officer

Washington, D.C. 20230

August 11, 2011

Mr. Alex Hunt
Chief, Information Policy Branch
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Hunt:

The Department of Commerce, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), requests an expedited review of a new information collection entitled "Joplin, MO Tornado Public Warnings and Response Interviews."

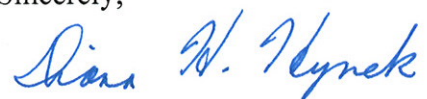
The National Construction Safety Team Act (Act), 15 U.S.C. 7301 et seq., authorizes the Director of NIST to establish investigative teams (teams) to assess building performance and emergency response, and evacuation procedures in the wake of any building failure that has resulted in substantial loss of life or that posed significant potential of substantial loss of life. The purpose of investigations by teams is to improve the safety and structural integrity of buildings in the United States. As stated in the statute, a team will (1) establish the likely technical cause or causes of the building failure; (2) evaluate the technical aspects of evacuation and emergency response procedures; (3) recommend, as necessary, specific improvements to building standards, codes, and practices based on the findings made pursuant to (1) and (2); and (4) recommend any research and other appropriate actions needed to improve the structural safety of buildings, and improve evacuation and emergency response procedures, based on the findings of the investigation.

NIST sent a preliminary reconnaissance team to study the tornado that touched down in Joplin, MO, on May 22, 2011. Based on the recommendations of the reconnaissance team and evaluation of the criteria listed in the Act, the Director of the NIST established a team to study the effects of the tornado on June 29, 2011. This clearance seeks approval to perform interviews with individuals who have knowledge and/or experiences related to the tornado. Interviews will specifically focus on obtaining information to: determine the pattern, location, and cause of fatalities and injuries, and associated emergency communications and public response. It is imperative that this data collection be conducted as quickly as possible to ensure the preservation of this perishable data. The interview data from any event, including the Joplin tornado, rely on individuals' memories of the event, which can degrade as the time period increases between the present and the disaster event.

NIST requests approval by August 19, 2011, and will begin the data collection immediately upon approval; completing data collection approximately two months later. The standard Paperwork Reduction Act process would delay the collection beyond this timeframe.

Your prompt attention to this matter is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diana H. Hynek". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'H'.

Diana H. Hynek
Information Collections Officer