

**Justification for Change in the Burden of
EIA-882T: Generic Clearance of Questionnaire Testing, Evaluating, and Research
OMB Number 1905-0186**

Introduction

The purpose of the EIA-882T: Generic Clearance of Questionnaire Testing, Evaluating, and Research is to utilize qualitative and quantitative methodologies to pretest questionnaires and validate the quality of the data that is collected on EIA survey forms. This information collection includes specific methods such as Field Testing, Pilot Surveys, Respondent Debriefings, Cognitive Interviews, Usability Interviews, and Focus Groups. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) submits this non-substantive change-in-burden request to accommodate anticipated research that is necessary to improve the quality of our data collections. In the near future EIA plans to conduct Pilot Survey testing on Form EIA-457A-N, “Residential Energy Consumption Survey” (RECS). Form EIA-882T, EIA’s Generic Testing and Research Clearance, was approved March 28, 2013 and currently allows for a total of 3000 respondent burden hours from March 2013 to February 2016. EIA is requesting approval to increase the limit on the number of burden hours to 9,017 to primarily accommodate researching proposed changes to the RECS.

The Household Survey phase of EIA’s RECS program has been conducted primarily using in-person interviews since its inception in the late 1970s. Since 1997, EIA and its contractors have used computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) as the means to collect critical household and structural characteristics related to energy use in the residential sector. With the rising cost of in-person interviews and the time lapse between each RECS cycle, EIA seeks to test the feasibility, cost effectiveness, time efficiency, and response validity of conducting the RECS Household Survey in new, less costly modes that produce statistically valid results that would put the RECS program on a more sustainable path. Furthermore, a new data collection platform may allow EIA to extend program capacities to cover special topics and data gaps, as well as develop estimates for small areas.

Justification For Pilot Survey Testing

Household Survey

EIA will conduct two rounds of pilots to test and evaluate the feasibility, cost effectiveness, and validity of moving to new modes of data collection for the RECS Household Survey. The results of the pilots should inform EIA’s ability to produce key statistical measures regarding cost effectiveness, burden, accuracy of reporting, timeliness, and completeness of responses so that EIA can budget for operating this survey in a cost effective manner and obtain better data quality in the future.

EIA estimates a total of 8,000 completed household surveys and an average of 20 minutes per complete, including all pilot tests. We expect most, if not all, responses to be from self-administered (Web or mail) questionnaires. The total respondent burden to conduct these pilot tests for the RECS Household survey is estimated to be 2,667 hours.

Energy Supplier Survey

The RECS program is a multi-phase data collection effort. The first phase involves using a Household Survey to collect information from households and the second phase involves collecting energy consumption data from energy suppliers.

In order to estimate detailed energy consumption and cost in U.S. homes, EIA collects monthly billing data from household energy suppliers (e.g. utilities, municipal suppliers, fuel oil dealers, etc.). To allow for a full evaluation of new modes of collection for the Household Survey phase, we will need to collect energy billing data for each household completing the Household Survey. This second data collection phase of RECS is referred to as the Energy Supplier Survey (ESS) and collections will be conducted using methods employed for the 2009 RECS.

Since many households use more than one fuel, the total number of data requests is greater than the total number of household completes for each pilot. EIA estimates a total of 13,000 requests for billing data at approximately 15 minutes per request. The total respondent burden to report billing data for the RECS ESS phase of these pilot tests is estimated to be 3,250 hours. The total number of respondents (electric, natural gas, fuel oil, and propane suppliers) for the 13,000 requests is estimated at 650 energy suppliers.

Cognitive Testing

EIA will also conduct cognitive interviews and pretesting for the Household Survey phase of these pilots. EIA estimates a total of 100 interviews at 60 minutes per interview. The total burden for cognitive testing is estimated to be 100 hours.