



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

December 10, 2014

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

SUBJECT: Use of Generic Clearance for U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA-882T (57), approved under OMB number 1905-0186), to conduct cognitive interviews and question pretesting for proposed additions and revisions to the EIA-457A, “Residential Energy Consumption Survey.”

Dear Desk Officer:

The Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECS) is a periodic series of surveys of households and their energy suppliers with the purpose of collecting and reporting energy characteristics, consumption, and expenditures data of homes in the United States. The data are widely used throughout the government and the private sector for policy analysis and are made available to the public via data tables, public-use data files, and analysis articles.

Background: EIA would like to update the household characteristics questions, which are administered on-site to sampled households by trained interviewers, in preparation for the 2015 RECS. Proposed changes include adding questions to collect information on new technologies and revising questions and response options to improve respondent clarity and data quality.

EIA’s survey methodologists and contractor staff from RTI International would like to conduct in-person cognitive interviews and online question pretesting. Respondents will be recruited from the general population and panelists of online testing platforms. The purpose of these efforts includes:

- Assessing the ability of respondents to accurately identify heating equipment and fuels used in their homes
- Assessing quality of respondent reported housing unit size (i.e. square footage)
- Researching improvements to equipment and appliance usage questions and response sets, including dishwasher and air-conditioning behavior
- Researching evolving trends in electronic and entertainment device usage to potentially improve on existing TV, TV peripheral, and computer behavior questions and response sets
- Assessing quality of existing lighting stock and behavior questions

- Pre-testing new questions or response options to capture new technologies, such as geothermal heat pumps and tablet computers

Proposed Methods: EIA and RTI plan to conduct 50 cognitive interviews with respondents recruited from the general population. These interviews will occur in two rounds of testing in January and February 2015 in three metropolitan areas. Each cognitive interview will take approximately one hour to conduct.

EIA and RTI also plan to use online panels to capture quick feedback from a broader base of potential respondents than is feasible from traditional cognitive interviews. This method will be used to construct new questions and refine some existing questions or response sets. Each online panel interaction will be short, requiring approximately eight minutes for respondents to complete the protocol. EIA and RTI plan for 150 online panel interactions. Respondents will be recruited from the existing pool of online panelists who are accustomed to performing similar tasks.

EIA will use the information collected from these methods to revise the household characteristics questions and response sets, and to add new questions. The methods will also allow EIA to more accurately assess the burden required for respondents to answer specific questions.

Burden: Each cognitive interview will be approximately one hour. Total burden across all interviews is estimated to be 50 hours. Each online pretesting interaction will be approximately eight minutes for a total of 20 hours for this method. Total respondent burden is 70 hours.

Costs for EIA are estimated to be \$5616.50

(\$69.33 * 50 hours = \$3466.50 for EIA/Contractor staff time)

(\$40.00 * 50 hours = \$2000.00 for Cognitive Interview respondents)

(\$1.00 * 150 respondents = \$150.00 for Online Panel respondents)

EIA will provide OMB with the results of these tests in the annual summary of generic clearances. Attached is the draft protocol, which will be used during the cognitive interviews and online panel pretesting interactions, and the EIA-457A used for the 2009 RECS.

For questions on these methods, please contact Jacob Bournazian (202-586-5562).

Sincerely,

Nanda Srinivasan, Director
Office of Survey Development and
Statistical Integration
U.S. Energy Information Administration