

# Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for Questionnaire Testing and Research” (OMB Control Number: 1905-0186)

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## TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: **2018 Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey (CBECS) Contact Protocol Pretesting**

**PURPOSE:** The Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey (CBECS) is a national sample survey that collects information on the stock of U.S. commercial buildings, including their energy-related building characteristics and energy usage data (consumption and expenditures). 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.

For the 2018 reference year CBECS data collection, respondents will have the option to complete a self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) via web. This is the first time in program history that they will have the option to self-report their responses to the questions on the form using the Internet, rather than work with an interviewer.

EIA seeks to test contact procedures—developed based on literature and best practices in the field of survey research that are tailored to this unique study population—and observe which features do or do not contribute to successful interactions and self-completion via web. This test will result in observations on how standard contact procedures perform for respondents in different building sizes and activities.

Web completion is typically less burdensome, less costly, and more efficient; thus, this research will identify what aspects of the initial interaction and materials promote self-completion via web method over traditional in-person interviews. The results from this research will provide critical information for field interviewer training, field procedures, and contact materials. This research will contribute to EIA’s understanding about: 1) which aspects of the contact materials and interviewer efforts do support a successful initial interaction, 2) which aspects do not and can be discarded, and 3) which types of building respondents can be motivated to complete a specific task, i.e. logging into and submitting a response to a short, self-administered web form.

Contractor staff from Westat plan to test contact procedures using 4 trained field interviewers. As is typically done in the main CBECS study, interviewers will –

- make an initial *cold contact* with a potential respondent at the address listed for the sampled buildings,
- observe and document procedures that help them gain cooperation from respondents and which procedures did not, and
- leave a packet of materials behind, including instructions for how to access the short, self-administered web form. EIA will seek to identify contact procedures that are successful in establishing a willingness to participate in more than 50% of the cold contacts as a more effective approach to use for conducting the survey in the next collection cycle.

No follow-up will be conducted on non-responding buildings during this test. The pretest will conclude after the 2 week period, regardless of whether or not all 464 buildings were contacted.

The contractor will deliver the following information at the conclusion of this test to inform our 2018 approach:

- Descriptions of the variety of strategies that were or were not successful in gaining respondent cooperation and encouraged survey completion through the web
- Recommendations for contact procedures and activities for the 2018 CBECS that, to the extent possible, maximize completion via web for this population
- Documentation of rates of completion for the task, i.e. rates at which a building respondent completed a web form by characteristics such as building size, and Principal Building Activity (PBA).

**DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:** Interviewers will attempt to contact respondents at 464 commercial buildings in two designated statistical sampling areas in Rockville, MD and Reston, VA, which include all CBECS building size ranges and PBA categories. According to CBECS procedures, the interviewer will identify a respondent who is knowledgeable about energy use in the building.

**TYPE OF COLLECTION:** (Check one)

Field Testing

Usability Testing

Pilot Surveys

Respondent Debriefings

Cognitive Interviews

Focus Groups

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**CERTIFICATION:**

I certify the following to be true regarding the proposed collection of information:

1. It is necessary for the proper performance of agency functions.
2. It avoids unnecessary duplication.
3. It reduces burden on small entities.
4. It uses plain, coherent, and unambiguous language that is understandable to respondents.
5. Its implementation will be consistent and compatible with current reporting and recordkeeping practices.
6. It indicates the retention periods for recordkeeping requirements.
7. It informs respondents of the information called for under 5 CFR 1320.8 (b)(3) about:
  - i. Why the information is being collected;
  - ii. Use of information;
  - iii. Burden estimate;
  - iv. Nature of response (voluntary, required for a benefit, or mandatory);
  - v. Nature and extent of confidentiality; and
  - vi. Need to display currently valid OMB control number
8. It was developed by an office that has planned and allocated resources for the efficient and effective management and use of the information to be collected.
9. It uses effective and efficient statistical survey methodology (if applicable).
10. It makes appropriate use of information technology.

Name: Thomas Leckey, Assistant Administrator for Energy Statistics,  
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To assist review, please provide answers to the following questions:

**Personally Identifiable Information:**

1. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected?  Yes  No
2. If Yes, will any information that is collected be included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974?  Yes  No
3. If Yes, has an up-to-date System of Records Notice (SORN) been published?  Yes  No

**Gifts or Payments:**

Is an incentive (e.g., money or reimbursement of expenses, token of appreciation) provided to participants?  Y  No

**BURDEN HOURS**

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Private sector (In-person)	464	10 minutes	78 hours
Pre-Interview preparation time	464	10 minutes	78 hours
<b>Totals</b>			156 hours

**ESTIMATE OF RESPONDENT BURDEN HOURS AND COST** – The burden to respondents is 156 hours and the cost to the respondents is estimated to be  $(\$75.69 * 156) = \$11,808$ .

**FEDERAL COST:** The estimated annual cost to the Federal government for the federal employee program staff is:  $\$75.69 * 40 \text{ hours} = \$3,028$ . The estimated annual cost to the Federal government for contractor staff is \$24,221 (4 interviewers in the field for two weeks). Because this pretest was part of the original scope of work for the contractor, these costs are budgeted as part of the overall CBECS contract.

**If you are conducting a focus group, survey, or plan to employ statistical methods, please provide answers to the following questions:**

**The selection of your targeted respondents**

1. Do you have a customer list or something similar that defines the universe of potential respondents and do you have a sampling plan for selecting from this universe?  
 Yes  No

If the answer is yes, please provide a description of both below (or attach the sampling plan)? If the answer is no, please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them?

As part of earlier research activities, EIA developed a list of all commercial buildings in two areas near Washington, DC, one in Rockville, MD and one in Reston, VA. The areas were selected due to their close proximity to EIA and its contractor, and because neither area is eligible for the 2018 CBECs sample. During the listing activity, field listers recorded building size and building activity for each commercial building in these areas.

As a result of this research, EIA knows that these two areas include a diversity of building sizes, building activities, and respondent types, making it an ideal source for this research activity. The nature of respondent-interviewer interactions vary more widely by these factors than by geography for this study population.

### **Administration of the Instrument**

1. How will you collect the information? (Check all that apply)
  - Web-based or other forms of Social Media
  - Telephone
  - In-person
  - Mail
  - Other, Explain
2. Will interviewers or facilitators be used?  Yes  No

**Please make sure that all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request.**

Instructions for completing Request for Approval under the  
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**TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:** Provide the name of the collection that is the subject of the request. (e.g. Comment card for soliciting feedback on xxxx)

**PURPOSE:** Provide a brief description of the purpose of this collection and how it will be used. If this is part of a larger study or effort, please include this in your explanation.

**DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:** Provide a brief description of the targeted group or groups for this collection of information. These groups must have experience with the program.

**TYPE OF COLLECTION:** Check one box. If you are requesting approval of other instruments under the generic, you must complete a form for each instrument.

**CERTIFICATION:** Please read the certification carefully. If you incorrectly certify, the collection will be returned as improperly submitted or it will be disapproved.

**Personally Identifiable Information:** Provide answers to the questions. Note: Agencies should only collect PII to the extent necessary, and they should only retain PII for the period of time that is necessary to achieve a specific objective.

**Gifts or Payments:** If you answer yes to the question, please describe the incentive and provide a justification for the amount.

**BURDEN HOURS:**

**Category of Respondents:** Identify who you expect the respondents to be in terms of the following categories: (1) Individuals or Households; (2) Private Sector; (3) State, local, or tribal governments; or (4) Federal Government. Only one type of respondent can be selected per row.

**No. of Respondents:** Provide an estimate of the Number of respondents.

**Participation Time:** Provide an estimate of the amount of time required for a respondent to participate (e.g. fill out a survey or participate in a focus group)

**Burden:** Provide the Annual burden hours: Multiply the Number of responses and the participation time and divide by 60.

**FEDERAL COST:** Provide an estimate of the annual cost to the Federal government.

**If you are conducting a focus group, survey, or plan to employ statistical methods, please provide answers to the following questions:**

**The selection of your targeted respondents.** Please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them. If the answer is yes, to the first question, you may provide the sampling plan in an attachment.

**Administration of the Instrument:** Identify how the information will be collected. More than one box may be checked. Indicate whether there will be interviewers (e.g. for surveys) or facilitators (e.g., for focus groups) used.

**Submit all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request.**