

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR
FEDERAL MARITIME COMMISSION
GENERIC INFORMATION REQUEST
Intake Forms, Alerts, and Surveys**

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

The Shipping Act of 1984 (The Shipping Act) , as amended by the Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 1998 authorizes private individuals to file a claim for reparations before the Federal Maritime Commission (Commission or FMC) against any persons that violate the Shipping Act. The Administrative Dispute Resolution Act, 5 U.S.C. § 571 et. seq. (“ADRA”), requires agencies to explore the use of alternative dispute resolution (e.g. use of *ombuds*, mediation, facilitation, etc.) to resolve disputes. As such, the agency created the Office of Consumer Affairs and Dispute Resolution Services (“CADRS”) to provide alternative dispute resolution services to agency stakeholders and the shipping public to resolve ongoing regulatory and commercial international ocean shipping and cruise passenger disputes. Parties may use CADRS on a voluntary basis either prior to or after filing a formal action before the Commission or other fora. In addition, as the office that serves as the front-line to emergent shipping issues, CADRS briefs senior agency staff with respect to arising industry trends and also educates the public on ways to prevent ocean shipping or cruise related challenges and disputes. The provision of these services will require the collection of information from members of the shipping public as follows.

First, CADRS - provided *ombuds*, mediation, facilitation, and arbitration services requires a basic review of the facts and issues in controversy. Upon request, CADRS staff will provide an Intake Form that requests parties in dispute seeking its services to provide party contact information, basic information regarding the issue or issues in dispute, as well as shipping documents that will help CADRS staff facilitate successful party – driven negotiated resolution of the dispute.

Secondly, there are times when industry circumstances (such as a cruise line disruption of service or bankruptcy, the detrimental activities of an unlicensed ocean transportation intermediary, or the winding down of an established ocean transportation intermediary) make it desirable for the agency to issue a consumer alert to notify the shipping public of the event or circumstances and to ask affected individuals and businesses to contact CADRS to obtain assistance and provide relevant information.

Finally, to maintain and to enhance further the services provided by CADRS, to target industry outreach and education needs to prevent and manage disputes, and to obtain other information regarding problem industry trends as well as data on party recovery trends, the FMC wishes to develop a voluntary “customer” survey that would be distributed to participants to complete upon the conclusion of an alternative dispute resolution proceeding.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used.

The Intake Form is designed to provide consumers and regulated entities with a simple mechanism for submitting requests for alternative dispute resolution services. The data collected will be used to render assistance to requesters in exploring resolution of ocean transportation related disputes.

The Intake Form will be provided on the Commission's website. Interested parties, however, may request that a paper Intake Form will be sent to them via email, facsimile, or postal mail. The Intake Form will prompt requesters for a description of key facts regarding the dispute, the desired resolution, the amount in controversy, and party contact information. Responses to these questions will help CADRS staff understand the issues and facts in dispute, the requester's desired outcome of the dispute, and the appropriate contact information for the parties to the dispute resolution proceeding.

The data provided by requesters may also be used by the Commission to identify problematic ocean shipping trends experienced by participants in the international shipping industry for the purpose of recommending general agency action or for constructing targeted industry outreach and education to prevent and/or address the challenges encountered. Such education and outreach may take the form of consumer alerts, meetings, seminars, presentations, education sessions, webinars, and other communication modes, as appropriate. Participants' identities and other identifying information would not be disclosed in generating such industry trend reports, statistical data, and training materials, in compliance with ADRA confidentiality requirements.

Finally, CADRS staff may use information from these surveys to improve dispute resolution services, obtain additional information regarding dispute and settlement trends, and to target and refine additional industry education and outreach efforts.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e, g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

The Commission hopes to use the agency's website for this data collection in an effort to minimize the cost burden to requesters. The agency will explore whether automated applications and/or surveys may be incorporated to streamline the process for requesting assistance. In addition, requesters will have the option of requesting a fillable PDF version of the Intake Form, or may request a non-fillable PDF copy of the form for emailing, mailing, texting, or faxing to the Commission.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication, Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Question 2.

No duplication of effort is involved because similar information is not available from outside sources nor elsewhere in the Commission.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities describe any methods used to minimize burden.

The data collection is not anticipated to burden small entities significantly. Small entities may wish to request alternative dispute resolution services or may otherwise be a party to an alternative dispute resolution proceeding. It is anticipated that the use of information for the purpose of providing alternative dispute resolution services may create cost savings for parties by avoiding costly administrative or court-based litigation.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted, or is conducted less frequently, as was as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

The Shipping Act charges the Commission with adjudicating ocean shipping disputes. ADRA requires agencies to explore means of resolving disputes related to agency programs through the use of alternative dispute resolution to avoid or mitigate the costs of administrative or court - based litigation.

The proposed collection is voluntary. Without the proposed data collection, the Commission would be unable to provide efficient alternative dispute resolution services. Further, the agency would lack the means to obtain timely data and feedback regarding emergent industry trends and challenges. Finally, without the information obtained in the survey, CADRS staff would not have a sufficient mechanism for obtaining stakeholder feedback regarding the quality and efficacy of the services provided.

7. Explain any specific circumstances that would cause information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- **Requiring requesters to report information to the agency more than quarterly;**
- **Requiring requesters to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;**
- **Requiring requesters to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;**

- **Requiring requesters to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years;**
- **In connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;**
- **Requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;**
- **That includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily**
- **Requiring requesters to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information unless that agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.**

There are no special circumstances.

- 8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register or agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, to clarify of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting form (if any) and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.**

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years even if the collection information is the same as in prior years. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should not be explained.

The 60-day *Federal Register* notice regarding this information collection was published September 3, 2015, at 80 FR 53310. Respondents had 60 days to respond with their views regarding collection of information; no comments were received.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to requesters, other than remuneration of contactors or grantees.

Not applicable. This information collection does not provide any payment or gift to the requesters.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to requesters and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

All information collection activities will be conducted in full compliance with the requirements of the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552a. At the point of information collection, the Commission's website will explain that personally identifiable information will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law and Commission rules.

Pursuant to ADRA and the Department of Justice and Interagency ADR Working Group confidentiality guidance documents, dispute resolution communications and confidential information are afforded confidentiality protection. See "Confidentiality in Federal Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs," Federal ADR Council/Department of Justice, 65 Fed. Reg. 83085 (December 29, 2000); "Protecting the Confidentiality of Dispute Resolution Proceedings. A Guide for Federal Workplace ADR Program Administrators" Interagency Alternative Dispute Resolution Working Group (April 2006) available at www.adr.gov. As such, a form submitted to CADRS that provides information for the purpose of initiating a dispute resolution proceeding within the meaning of ADRA would be considered a convening document and therefore afforded confidentiality under ADRA. Further, communications between the neutral and the parties to a dispute resolution proceeding would be afforded confidentiality under ADRA.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

Not applicable – no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. Indicate the number of requesters, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated.

The number of requesters will vary from year to year based upon the number of individuals seeking to initiate a dispute resolution proceeding within CADRS. For example, in FY 2015,

CADRS received 689 new requests for assistance. As such, there would be 689 requests within that fiscal year.

The introduction of a form requesting assistance is a new endeavor undertaken by agency staff. As such, CADRS can only estimate that it will take no longer than 45 minutes for a requester to complete the guided form. To generate a potential estimate, CADRS reviewed 10 recent requests for assistance that were received during FY 2016. These requests were received via email (which represents the vast majority of intake in CADRS) and were generally in letter or note form outlining the various issues involved, the party's goals and objectives, and requesters reported that response times ranged between 10 minutes to 2 days with averaging 4 hours and 45 minutes. While the number of requests will vary from year to year, CADRS staff used the FY 2015 number of requests, 689, for calculation purposes.

While the completed submission times averaged 4 hours and 45 minutes, it is anticipated that the form submission will take significantly less time for requesters to complete, as it will streamline the input process and avoid the reporting of irrelevant information and encourage requesters to provide shorter bulleted, rather than narrative, responses.

Prior Requests for Assistance

Type of Intake	Estimated Number of Requesters	Estimated Number of Requests Per Requester	Average Burden Hours Per Intake	Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours
Email	689	1	4 Hours 44 Minutes	3067 Hours

Requests for Assistance Using Intake Form (Estimate)

Type if Intake	Estimated Number of Requesters	Estimated Number of Requests Per Requester	Average Burden Hours Per Intake	Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours Requested
Email	689	1	45 Minutes	517 Hours

With respect to potential surveys to be completed by requesters that have utilized CADRS's alternative dispute resolution services, the issuance of a survey would be a new endeavor. However, CADRS notes that completion of the survey is voluntary on the part of the participant, and estimates that it would take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

- 13. Provide estimates of the total annual cost burden to requesters or record-keepers resulting from the collection of information (do not include the cost of any burden shown in questions 12 and 14). The cost estimate should be split into two components (a) a total capital and start-up cost component annualized over its**

expected useful life; and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component.

There will be no annualized startup capital or start-up costs for the requesters to collect and submit this information.

14. Provide estimates of annualized costs to the Federal government. Provide a description of the method used to estimate cost and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

Total annual cost to the Federal government is estimated to be approximately \$127,802.40. The cost to the Federal government is based upon a calculation of office case load, staff salaries and overhead (see attachment 1).

The estimate takes into account time spent by CADRS receiving, assigning, and reviewing consumer requests for *ombuds* assistance. It does not include the time spent by CADRs staff providing dispute resolution services. CADRS staff were surveyed and indicated that it takes an average of 30 minutes to receive and assign an *ombuds* matter plus an additional hour to review a submission after it is assigned before initiating the dispute resolution proceeding.

The receipt and assignment of cases is performed by a GS – 7 Support Specialist. The review of information is performed by 3 attorney-mediators and/or 1 transportation specialist who conduct ADR proceedings. CADRS staff may consult with the Director and/or Deputy Director on consumer requests for assistance during the assignment and review process.

During FY 2015, CADRS received 689 cases that were assigned among 4 staff members. The calculation captures the 30 minutes per matter spent by the Support Specialist receiving and assigning matters as well as the hour per matter allocated on a case load basis by each of the 4 attorney mediators/transportation specialist. The calculation also accounts for time spent by the Director and Deputy Director overseeing and managing the intake and review process.

The attached chart calculates the number of hours allocated per each employee by the calculated hourly salary to provide the total of \$127,802.40. There are no other expenses that would have not been incurred without this collection of information.

Intake and Provision of ADR Services

Initial case intake is conducted by a GS-7 Support Specialist. The Support Specialist responds to inquiries via telephone, letter, fax, and email and performs a preliminary review of requests for assistance.

Provision of services includes the review of information submitted by requesters to CADRS staff in support of a request for alternative dispute resolution services, follow - up correspondence with parties to the dispute, conducting the dispute resolution proceeding, and a final matter closeout.

Management and Program Outreach Activities

Management and program outreach activities include oversight of staff provision of alternative dispute resolution services and general program management as well as conducting outreach and education based upon information provided to assist the shipping public with preventing and resolving ocean shipping disputes.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments.

Not applicable. There are no program changes or adjustments.

16. For collections of information whose results are planned to be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication.

Generally, the Commission does not intend to publish information collected under this collection. However, the Commission may report statistical information taken from the information collected such as the number of requests for assistance received in a given year, the types of cases received (e.g. cargo dispute, cruise dispute, etc.), and the collective financial impact of a potential problematic trends.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

Not applicable. The Commission is not requesting any exceptions to the certification statement.

Attachment 1

14. Estimated Burden and Costs, Including Overhead, to Federal Government

The annual salary calculations have been formulated using the Federal Government's 2015 salary table (overhead of 109.70% has been added to the basic salary).

Office Director SES – 115 hours

$\$168,700/2087 = \$80.83 + 109.70\% = \$169.50$ adjusted hourly cost

Deputy Director 15/5 – 115 hours

$\$143,079/2087 = \$68.55 + 109.70\% = \$143.74$ adjusted hourly cost

Attorney-Advisor 14/5 – 232 hours

$\$121,635/2087 = \$58.28 + 109.70\% = \$122.21$ adjusted hourly cost

Attorney-Advisor 14/5 – 237 hours

$\$121,635/2087 = \$58.28 + 109.70\% = \$122.21$ adjusted hourly cost

Transportation Specialist 12/5 – 99 hours

$\$86,564/2087 = \$41.47 + 109.70\% = \$86.96$ adjusted hourly cost

Transportation Analyst 12/5 – 3 hours

$\$86,564/2087 = \$41.47 + 109.70\% = \$86.96$ adjusted hourly cost

Attorney-Advisor 11/5 – 120 hours

$\$72,219/2087 = \$34.60 + 109.70\% = \$72.55$ adjusted hourly cost

Program Support Specialist 7/5 – 334.5 hours

$\$48,796/2087 = \$23.38 + 109.70\% = \$49.02$ adjusted hourly cost

Employee	Hourly Salary	Number of Hours	Total
Office Director	\$169.50	115	\$ 19,492.50
Deputy Director	\$143.74	115	\$ 16, 530.10
Attorney-Advisor	\$122.21	232	\$ 28,352.72
Attorney-Advisor	\$122.21	237	\$ 28,963.77
Transportation Specialist	\$ 86.96	99	\$ 8,609.04
Transportation Analyst*	\$ 86.96	3	\$ 260.88
Attorney-Advisor**	\$72.55	120	\$ 8,706
Program Support Specialist	\$49.02	344.5	\$ 16,887.39
TOTALS	\$730.94	5,063.5	\$ 127,802.40

*Employee temporarily detailed for 120 days from another Commission office.

** New full-time employee that was co-assigned on additional cases not reflected in the chart for training purposes.