

Annual Tank Car Facility Survey ICR Package

OMB Control Number 2139-XXXX

Section B

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B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

B1. Describe the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Indicate the expected response rates for the collection as a whole.

The coverage of this information collection will include all known tank car facilities that are certified to either build or retrofit tank cars to the new safer DOT-117 or 117R standard. Thus, it is a census of eligible facilities with no survey sampling techniques employed. Across the United States, there are approximately 400 tank car facilities that can build, modify or repair tank cars. A comprehensive listing of tank car shops is maintained by the Association of American Railroads (AAR). AAR also provides the certification for these facilities. The certification clearly delineates the functions individual shops can perform, including whether a specific facility can build and/or retrofit tank cars. Of the universe of nearly 400 tank car shops, at most 140 have the capability and certification to either build or retrofit tank cars to the new DOT-117 or 117R standard. About 10 shops can actually manufacture a new DOT-117 tank cars, while approximately 125 can modify a tank car to the new safer DOT-117(R) standard.

Under an existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), AAR has agreed to provide BTS with the listing for all certified tank car facilities in the nation. BTS will use this listing and associated data elements to define the census of certified tank car facilities. All eligible facilities will be encouraged to participate and the person or persons within the operation who are most knowledgeable about these specific operations will be selected to complete the questionnaire. In most cases, the contact information is already provided on the frame itself, although some updating will likely be needed.

The anticipated response rate for this data collection is 80 percent. This is consistent with another voluntary data collection conducted by BTS. Also, given the small population and limited amount of information collected, focused efforts will be made to obtain the cooperation of all facilities.

B2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information

The data will be collected via an internet web reporting tool. An advance letter will be sent via mail to respondents requesting they provide the information via the internet. A unique username and password will also be provided. In limited circumstances and at the request of respondents, information can also be collected via telephone. As described above, the Tank Car Survey is a census of all tank car facilities which are certified and have the capacity to build or modify tank cars, therefore no sampling or stratification procedures will be employed. All facilities will be asked to participate and summary information will be tabulated and reported. It is estimated that the data collection period for this survey will be approximately 3 months from the mail out of advance letter to data collection close out.

B3. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of non-response.

The Annual Tank Car Survey will be a voluntary data collection. We are working with representatives from the American Association of Railroads and the Railway Supply Institute (RSI) to encourage participation from their constituents and stakeholders. Other techniques used to maximize response rates will include the use of an advance letter to inform facilities about the purpose of the census and the limited amount of information being requested. A notification banner will also appear on the Tank Car Survey website with a list of Frequently Asked Questions and other supporting materials for the Census. BTS has also established a toll-free number and email address for respondents to call in the event they have questions about the survey. Telephone follow-up will be used as needed to increase response rate.

Given the small population size, project staff will monitor each facility closely and establish relationships with facility contacts to encourage participation, answer questions, and assist as needed.

Our expected response rate is 80 percent. Regardless of the response rate we will conduct a nonresponse bias analysis to estimate the impact of any nonresponse. The AAR certification listing contains company information on size, number of facilities, and functions which will allow us to easily assess differences between responding and non-responding populations. Also, given the small population size, facility information can be easily obtained from websites and other public forums to further improve our understanding of those facilities that did not respond.

B4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken.

We have engaged staff from PHMSA, AAR and RSI in the development of survey. They have reviewed the web reporting tool to ensure correct tank car types were included and language and questions were clear and appropriate for the industry. In addition, we plan to select approximately 5 facilities prior to fielding the survey for usability testing of the web reporting tool. This testing will ensure respondents can easily access the tool, navigate correctly through the survey, and save and submit their responses appropriately.

B5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

The selection of the census population, data collection, follow-up operations, analysis and writing the summary report will be conducted exclusively by BTS staff.

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