

**Generic Information Collection Request:
Early stage scoping interviews for the Commodity Flow Survey & PHMSA:
Expanded Hazardous Materials Data Collection**

Request: The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the Generic Clearance for Internet Nonprobability Panel Pretesting (OMB number 0607-0978) for the Commodity Flow Survey (CFS). These activities will include early stage scoping interviews with respondents to the 2017 CFS to learn whether these respondents are able to answer new questions that are related to the shipment of hazardous materials (HAZMAT), without significantly increasing respondent burden.

The CFS is administered every 5 years through a partnership between the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS). It provides data on the movement of goods in the United States including commodities shipped, their value, weight, and mode of transportation, as well as the origin and destination of shipments of commodities from manufacturing, mining, wholesale, and selected retail and services establishments. These data are used by policy makers and transportation planners to evaluate the demand for transportation facilities and services, energy use, and safety risk and environmental concerns. Additionally, the data collected from CFS are also used to analyze trends in the movement of goods, mapping spatial patterns of commodity and vehicle flows, forecasting demands for the movement of goods, and determining needs for associated infrastructure and equipment.

Further information regarding the Commodity Flow Survey can be found at this website: <https://www.census.gov/econ/cfs/> .

The Commodity Flow Survey collects some data pertaining to hazardous materials (HAZMAT). The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) is the primary regulator of packaging for hazardous materials. The objective of PHMSA is to help ensure the safe transportation of HAZMAT, and to document its movement across the country. By collecting more specific information about HAZMAT via the CFS, it may assist analysts in tracking trends and determining HAZMAT exposure and risk profiles.

PHMSA has experienced a dearth of usable shipment data related to the movement of hazardous material across the United States. Frequently data users are underreporting relevant data that may otherwise improve both a more accurate understanding of the movement of this commodity as well as improve the safety of its transportation.

PHMSA having access to more information about the flow of HAZMAT may also help ensure updated safety standards are being met. For example, there is a list of requirements for shipping HAZMAT by mode of transportation ([49 CFR 172.101](#)). Currently, when PHMSA standards are updated and changes are made to this list, without anecdotal evidence, there is no way to measure whether those changes have been implemented. In these instances, safety can be improved by having access to a more consistent flow of data, as well as more detailed information about the transportation of HAZMAT.

PHMSA has an interest in collecting data pertaining to HAZMAT that includes the (a) type of HAZMAT, (b) the packaging used, (c) the volume and (d) its mode of transportation. In collaboration with PHMSA, Census Bureau researchers will explore whether it is feasible for these new HAZMAT related questions to be integrated into the current CFS data collection, with the assumption that CFS will become an annual survey after 2022. If this information can be gathered via CFS data collection, it may further assist PHMSA in improving the safety of HAZMAT transportation.

Further information regarding the PHMSA can be found at this website:
<https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/>

Purpose: The purpose of this evaluation is primarily to understand if the individual tasked with responding to the CFS is also the individual best suited to retrieve the hazardous material data. This will in turn reveal whether the CFS is an appropriate vessel for PHMSA data collection.

The primary interest of PHMSA is to capture four related pieces of data (a) the type of HAZMAT (b) what container the HAZMAT was packaged in (c) the quantity/volume of the HAZMAT and (d) the mode of transportation. Researchers will conduct early stage scoping interviews to assess the capability of respondents to provide more detailed data on the transportation of hazardous material, and explore the potential effects on respondent burden by providing more detailed data on HAZMAT packaging, quantity and mode of transport.

The results from these early stage scoping interviews will be consolidated into a report that outlines the findings and suggestions for next steps.

Population of Interest: U.S. companies that ship goods, across a variety of sizes, industries, and locations.

Timeline: Testing will begin in October 2019 and will likely conclude by December 2019. Recruiting for these interviews will begin in October 2019, lasting through December 2019. The interviews will take place between late October and December 2019.

Language: Testing will be conducted in English only.

Method: We plan to conduct a combination of phone and in-person¹ early stage interviews with approximately 30 respondents. We will be asking early stage scoping questions, which have a broader focus on the respondents' understanding and familiarity with the concepts being addressed in the question, the way their company's records are organized to access the data, and the terminology that they use in reference to these concepts. In-person interviews will take place at the respondent's location. The locations for each round have not yet been selected, but they will be determined based on where we expect to find companies who are most likely to have HAZMAT transportation. We will request that the early stage coping interviews be audio recorded with the participants' permission (see attachment B), to aid researchers in accurately

¹ Testing locations to be determined.

summarizing key findings from the interviews. The early stage scoping interviews will follow a semi-structured interview protocol (Attachment A).

Sample: We plan to conduct a total of 30 interviews across two rounds of testing. This number of interviews was selected because it is a manageable number of interviews for the time period allotted, and should be large enough to provide reactions to the questions and definitions that are representative of the survey population. We plan to conduct interviews with a variety of sizes and types (i.e., industries) of business establishments. Efforts will be made to sample respondents across industries representative of companies that participated in the CFS and with an emphasis on those that indicated they had HAZMAT transportation. The sampling frame for these interviews comes from a list of companies that participated in the 2017 and 2012 CFS.

Recruitment:

We will contact potential interviewees via phone or email, explain the nature of our research, and ask them to participate in our study. The sample of participants will be those who are able to be contacted and who agree to participate in the study. Participants will be informed that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential and will be seen only by Census Bureau employees involved in the research project. We will not be providing monetary incentives to participants in this study. Once interviews are scheduled, researchers will send respondents a confirmation via email, and may conduct reminder calls a few days before the meetings.

Protocol: The protocol for the study is enclosed (see Attachment A). We anticipate that each interview will take 60 minutes to complete.

Use of Incentive: Monetary incentives for participation will not be offered.

Below is a list of materials to be used in the current study:

1. **Attachment A:** Protocol used to outline how the research study will be conducted
2. **Attachment B:** Consent form to obtain participant consent for participation and recording of the session
3. **Attachment C:** 2017 CFS survey to illustrate the survey being considered for collecting this data

Length of interview: For the early stage scoping interviews, we expect that each interview will last no more than 60 minutes (30 cases x 60 minutes per case = 30 hours). Additionally, to recruit respondents we expect to make up to 5 phone contacts per completed case. The recruiting calls are expected to last on average 3 minutes per call (5 attempted phone calls per completed case x 30 cases x 3 minute per case = 7.5 hours). Thus, the estimated burden for this project is 37.5 hours (30 hours for interviews + 7.5 hours for recruiting).

The contact person for questions regarding data collection and statistical aspects of the design of this research is listed below:

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