

**Supporting Statement for
Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions**

OMB Control Number: 1219 – 0025

Information Collection Title: Application for a Permit to Fire More than 20 Boreholes and/or for the use of Nonpermissible Blasting Units, Explosives, and Shot-firing Units; Posting Notices of Misfires

Form Number(s): None

Authority: 30 CFR Sections 75.1321, 75.1327, and 77.1909-1

General Instructions

A Supporting Statement, including the text of the notice to the public required by 5 CFR 1320.5(a)(i)(iv) and its actual or estimated date of publication in the Federal Register, must accompany each request for approval of a collection of information. The Supporting Statement must be prepared in the format described below, and must contain the information specified in Section A below. If an item is not applicable, provide a brief explanation. When the question “Does this ICR contain surveys, censuses or employ statistical methods” is checked "Yes", Section B of the Supporting Statement must be completed. OMB reserves the right to require the submission of additional information with respect to any request for approval.

Specific Instructions

JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

Section 103(h) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 (Mine Act), 30 U.S.C. 813(h), authorizes the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to collect information necessary to carry out its duty in protecting the safety and health of miners. Further, section 101(a) of the Mine Act, 30 U.S.C. 811, authorizes the Secretary of

Labor (Secretary) to develop, promulgate, and revise as may be appropriate, improved mandatory health or safety standards for the protection of life and prevention of injuries in coal and metal and nonmetal mines.

Under section 313 of Mine Act, 30 U.S.C. 873, any explosives used in underground coal mines must be permissible. The Mine Act also provides that under safeguards prescribed by the Secretary, a mine operator may permit the firing of more than 20 shots and the use of nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units in sinking shafts and slopes from the surface in rock. Title 30 CFR 75.1321 outlines the procedures by which a permit may be issued for the firing of more than 20 boreholes and/or the use of nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units in underground coal mines. If there is a misfire of explosives, section 75.1327 requires that a qualified person post each accessible entrance to the affected area with a warning to prohibit entry. Section 77.1909-1 outlines the procedures by which a coal mine operator may apply for a permit to use nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units in the blasting of rock while sinking shafts or slopes for underground coal mines.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

MSHA uses the information requested to issue a permit to the mine operator for the use of nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units. The permit informs mine management and miners of the steps to protect the safety of any person exposed to such blasting while using nonpermissible items.

To obtain a permit, the mine operator files an application with the MSHA district manager in the district in which the mine is located. Applications contain the name and address of the mine, the designated active workings in which the units will be used and the approximate number of shots to be fired, the period of time during which such units are to be used, the nature of the development or construction for which they will be used, a plan to protect miners, a statement of the specific hazards anticipated, and the method to be employed to avoid the dangers anticipated.

The district manager may permit the firing of more than 20 boreholes of permissible explosives in a round when determining that it is necessary to reduce the overall hazard to which miners are exposed during underground blasting. The district manager may permit the use of nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units when finding that a permissible shot-firing unit does not have adequate blasting capacity and the use of such permissible units will create development or construction hazards. As a condition of use, the district manager may include safeguards, in addition to those proposed by the operator, that are necessary to protect the safety of the miners at the time the district manager permits blasting.

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.

Applications may be mailed, emailed, or faxed, using company letterhead stationery. No improved information technology has been identified that would reduce the burden. The applications to fire more than 20 boreholes, or to use nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units in shaft or slope construction are narrative descriptions of the equipment and explosives to be used, the number and pattern of the boreholes to be fired, and the safety precautions to be employed. The applications may include schematics, tables, and drawings. Such narrative plans and simple graphics can be prepared using personal computers and submitted via email, where the mine operator has the capability of affixing transmittable authorization signatures, or where the respondent follows with an email or facsimile by a signed hard copy.

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 Item 2 above.

There is no similar or duplicate information that MSHA could use. MSHA issues permits on a mine-by-mine basis for the period specified by the district manager. MSHA is not aware of any State agency or other party requiring such permit approval.

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

This information collection does not have a significant impact on small businesses or other small entities.

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

In the absence of this collection, or permits for explosives and/or shot-firing units, the mine operator or shaft and slope contractors would be putting miners at risk. There would be no guarantee that the mine operator would have a plan designed to ensure the protection of life and the prevention of injuries to the miners exposed to underground blasting. In addition, MSHA would be unable to enforce the safety and health requirements of the Mine Act regarding the use of nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units without this collection.

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

- **requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;**

Permit applications, which contain all pertinent information, are submitted one time at any given mine. There are no requirements for the respondent to report the ongoing or occasional use of the district manager-approved blasting plan, including the use of nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units or the firing of more than 20 boreholes. However, while a mine operator is not explicitly required to submit information more than once, revised applications do need to be submitted to MSHA any time the conditions outlined in item 6 of this statement occur.

- **requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;**
- **requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;**
- **requiring respondents 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 impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or**
- **requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secret, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.**

This collection of information is otherwise consistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.5.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the data and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the 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, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (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 of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

MSHA published a 60-day *Federal Register* notice on September 11, 2019 (84 FR 47971). MSHA received one public comment that was outside of the scope of the collection.

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

MSHA does not provide payments or gifts to respondents.

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

There is no assurance of confidentiality provided to the respondents.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and 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 the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

There are no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:

- **Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.**

- **If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens.**
- **Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead, this cost should be included in Item 13.**

30 CFR Sections 75.1321 and 77.1909-1

The number of active mining units using explosives to break coal has decreased from 30 in 2015 to 17 in 2018. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, 31 permit applications were received (27 under section 75.1321 and 4 under section 77.1909-1). MSHA is using the actual FY2018 numbers as the basis of this collection estimate. MSHA estimates that, on average, an engineer¹ at an underground coal mine, earning \$67.49 per hour², would take one hour to prepare and submit a permit application.

Burden Hours: 31 mine operators submitting 1 response per application x 1 hour per application = 31 hours

Burden Costs: 31 hours x \$67.49 per hour = \$2,092

30 CFR Section 75.1327

The use of explosives may occasionally result in a misfire. In such cases, a qualified person is required to post a conspicuous warning notice at the entrance to the affected area. From 2016-2018, there was only one misfire requiring notice and that it takes, on average, an underground coal miner 20 minutes to post a notice warning that a misfire that has not been disposed of is present. MSHA estimates the hourly wage rate for an underground coal miner to be \$40.97 per hour³.

Burden Hours: 1 mine operator submitting 1 response per notice x 20 minutes per notice = 20 minutes

1 For all wage rates, MSHA uses the relevant precision throughout the calculation to avoid compound rounding errors and rounds at the final rate value. Displayed intermediate calculation values are presented to explain the calculation and are representative but the final rate value reflects the correct rounding and final estimate.

2 For the coalmine engineer hourly wage rates, MSHA used the employment weighted mean hourly wage from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) May 2018 survey (www.bls.gov/oes), for 4 engineering worker occupations from Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) major group codes 11, and 17 and industry codes 212100 of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes historically represented in the approval requests. The weighted mean was adjusted for benefits and inflation to obtain a fully loaded rate of \$67.49 (\$44.41 x 1.49 x 1.02) for a coalmine engineer.

3 For the coal miner hourly wage rates, MSHA used the employment weighted mean hourly wage from the OES May 2018 survey (www.bls.gov/oes), for 12 extraction worker occupations from Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) major group codes 47, 51, and 53 and industry codes 212100 of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes historically represented in the approval requests. The weighted mean was adjusted for benefits and inflation to obtain a fully loaded rate of \$40.97 (\$26.96 x 1.49 x 1.02) for a coal miner

Burden Costs: 20 minutes x \$40.97 per hour = \$14

Question 12 Totals:

Respondents = 17

Responses = 32

Burden Hours = 31

Hour Burden Cost = \$2,106

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected on the burden worksheet).

- **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. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information. Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of capital equipment, the discount rate(s), and the time period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs include, among other items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling and testing equipment; and record storage facilities.**
- **If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of purchasing or contracting out information collection services should be a part of this cost burden estimate. In developing cost burden estimates, agencies may consult with a sample of respondents (fewer than 10), utilize the 60-day pre-OMB submission public comment process and use existing economic or regulatory impact analysis associated with the rulemaking containing the information collection, as appropriate.**
- **Generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof, made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.**

MSHA estimates that the narrative and any tables, charts, or drawings created for use in the permit application can be developed on normal office equipment used in the customary and usual course of business. Applications submitted by email or fax would not incur mailing costs. MSHA estimates that the cost to mail an application is

approximately \$7. MSHA estimates that 47 percent of respondents mail the applications and 53 percent submit them electronically:

Burden Costs: 31 applications x 47 percent x \$7 per application = \$105

MSHA also estimates that the warning notice/sign of a misfire will be non-reusable, pre-printed "danger/misfire" placards. The estimated cost of placards is approximately \$10 each.

Burden Costs: 1 postings x \$10 = \$10

Question 13 Total

Burden Costs = \$115

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information. Agencies also may aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.

MSHA estimates that the review and preparation of a written response of a permit application requires approximately 4 hours. Review and preparation of the written response will be done by a MSHA technical specialist (GS-12) earning \$56.62 per hour, including benefits⁴.

31 applications x 4 hours = 124 hours
124 hours x \$56.62 per hour = \$7,021

Cost to the Federal Government = \$7,021

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported on the burden worksheet.

Because respondents decreased from 30 to 17 and applications for permits decreased from 70 to 31, burden hours decreased from 77 to 31 and responses decreased from 91 to 32.

The total annual cost burden has decreased from \$455 to \$115 due to the reduction in the number of applications and related costs.

⁴ Hourly wage rate developed from Office of Personnel Management (OPM) March 2018 *FedScope* employment cube, <http://www.fedscope.opm.gov/>. Average annual salary of \$84,469 obtained from DOL-MSHA employees. Data search qualifiers are: agency = DLMS, occupation = 1822, Salary Grade = GS-12. In order to include the cost of benefits, this annual average salary was multiplied by a benefits scaler of 1.399 computed from MSHA's 2020 budget submission. The final hourly wage rate was derived by dividing the adjusted annual average salary by 2,087 hours [$\$56.62 = (\$84,469 \times 1.399) \div 2,087$ annual hours]

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation, and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

MSHA does not intend to publish the results of this information collection.

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.

MSHA is not seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of this information collection. There are no instruments associated with this information collection on which to display an expiration date.

18. Explain each exception to the topics of the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."

MSHA is not requesting an exception to the certification statement.

B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods

As statistical analysis is not required by the regulation, questions 1 through 5 do not apply.