

National Outbreak Reporting System

Request for OMB approval of a New Information Collection

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Supporting Statement B

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1. Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods

The National Outbreak Reporting System (NORS) is a web-based platform used by local, state, and territorial health departments in the United States to report to CDC all waterborne and foodborne disease outbreaks and enteric disease outbreaks transmitted by contact with environmental sources, infected persons or animals, or unknown modes of transmission. NORS report forms and instructions are available on the NORS website; state, territorial, and local health department staff submit outbreak reports to CDC on an ongoing basis using the password-protected, web-based reporting system. NORS is a nationally-available system, so no sample selection is required.

Participation in NORS is voluntary; however, NORS provides the mechanism for reporting nationally notifiable foodborne and waterborne outbreaks. Following a rigorous yearly data cleaning process, CDC provides public access to NORS data via a website called NORS Dashboard (<https://wwwn.cdc.gov/norsdashboard/>). In addition, CDC publishes reports and analyses using NORS data in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) and other relevant journals.

2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

Data on all foodborne and waterborne outbreaks, as well as enteric disease outbreaks transmitted by contact with environmental sources, infected persons or animals, or unknown modes of transmission are collected by state, local, and territorial health department staff through routine outbreak investigations. These data are transmitted to CDC through NORS, using a web-based reporting system that is hosted by CDC (ITSO/AHB). Though paper forms for NORS (Attachments 4 and 5) are available as reference tools, no paper forms are collected by CDC; all data must be submitted electronically. The data collected in NORS do not include personally identifiable information; data on outbreak-associated cases are reported in aggregate, in addition to information such as the reporting date of the outbreak, setting and dates of exposure, and outbreak etiologies.

3. Methods to maximize Response Rates and Deal with No Response

Data on all foodborne and waterborne outbreaks, as well as enteric disease outbreaks transmitted by contact with environmental sources, infected persons or animals, or unknown modes of transmission are reported to CDC through NORS. While data are collected passively with voluntary participation from state, local, and territorial public health departments, foodborne and waterborne outbreaks, as well as outbreaks caused by certain pathogens, are nationally notifiable and must be reported through NORS.

Health department staff are able to submit, review, and edit outbreak data on an ongoing basis, thus encouraging timely data submission to NORS.

4. Tests of Procedures or Methods to be undertaken

NORS has been used by state, local, and territorial health departments since 2009, with minor revisions to the information collection instruments. Prior to NORS, data were collected as part of the Foodborne Disease Outbreak Surveillance System, and the Waterborne Disease & Outbreak Surveillance System, which have been collecting data on foodborne and waterborne outbreaks in the United States since 1966 and 1971, respectively. The information collection instruments for NORS were previously approved as part of OMB Control No. 0920-0004. The time to complete the form was tested by completing the form for each mode of transmission at least three times. The average of each mode was weighed, based on the reporting frequency of each mode for the past three years. The average time to complete a NORS form is 20 minutes per outbreak.

5. Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects and Individuals Collecting and/or Analyzing Data

State and territorial public health departments report NORS data elements to CDC. CDC may consult internally on statistical aspects of NORS analyses as necessary. Individual states and territories will have access to NORS data in accordance with established data-use guidelines and user permissions.