

Annual Tank Car Facility Survey ICR Package

Renewal of OMB Control Number 2138-0047

Section B

May 5,2021

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 facilities, known as 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 175 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 uses this listing as a frame along with the 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.

In the three years this survey has been fielded, the response rate has ranged from 69% to 90% as seen in the below table:

Year	% Response	Total Shops in Frame
2018	75%	148
2019	69%	148
2020	90%	149

Going forward 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 intent of this data collection is that it will be completed almost exclusively online using an online survey tool located on a secure BTS server. As a survey of businesses, it is anticipated that the respondents will have access to the Internet and can easily complete the survey via the web reporting tool. In practice, it has been found that some respondents are disinclined to respond via the online tool. However, they are receptive to answering the survey questions over the phone.

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. In addition to the advance letter, a follow-up letter is sent to non-respondents to encourage

participation. 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 is a voluntary data collection. Other techniques used to maximize response rates 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 also appears 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 monitor each facility closely and have established relationships with facility contacts to encourage participation, answer questions, and assist as needed.

Our expected response rate continues to be 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.

Attachment C contains the text of the letters from the 2020 survey. The letters for 2021 and other future years will be very similar.

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

Since no substantive changes have been made to the survey tool or other materials, no additional tests will be undertaken.

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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