

2022 SUPPORTING STATEMENT

**7 CFR Part 1924-F – Complaints and Compensation for Construction Defects
OMB No. 0575-0082**

A. Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

Section 509 of Title V of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended, authorizes the Rural Housing Service (RHS) to pay the costs for correcting defects or compensate borrowers of Section 502 Direct loan funds for expenses arising out of defects with respect to newly constructed dwellings and new manufactured housing units with funds authorized under this title.

This is a reactionary-type procedure implemented to fulfill a need to inform field offices on how to deal with complaints generated by the public. The objective of this procedure is to be responsive to the public served by the Agency; and to minimize claims and civil actions against the Government by instituting a procedure for the resolution of complaints.

All Rural Housing Service personnel are to implement a procedure to accept and process complaints from the borrowers/owners against builders and dealers/contractors to resolve the complaint. When the complaint involves structural defects which cannot be resolved by the cooperation of the builders or dealers/contractors, the program authorizes expenditure to resolve the defects with grant funds, such resolution could involve expenditure for (1) repairing defects; (2) reimbursing for emergency repairs; (3) pay temporary living expenses or (4) convey dwelling to RHS with release of liability for the RHS loan.

The intent is to provide individual homeowners with housing that is free of defects which directly and significantly reduces the useful life, the habitability, or integrity of the dwelling or unit. However, claims must be filed within the first 18 months after the date financial assistance was granted to build a single-family dwelling or a manufactured housing unit.

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.

The information is collected from the Agency's borrowers and the local Agency office serving the county in which the dwelling is located. This information is used by the Rural Housing Staff to evaluate the request and assist the borrower in identifying possible causes and corrective actions. The information is collected on a case-by-case basis when

initiated by the borrower. RHS has reviewed the program's need for the collection of information versus the burden placed on the public and determined the program's need is necessary and beneficial. Failure by RHS to correct structural defects will be costly to the Government in that property serving as security for the Government loan would have reduced property value. In addition, failure to correct the defects would result in the loss of the available housing stock for the public.

The specific burden of information to be cleared includes the following:

Reporting Requirement – No forms

Notice to Contractor from Borrower of Construction Defects (Complaints)

Complaints in this subpart refer to expressions of dissatisfaction made by RHS borrowers, a person(s) have received program assistance to purchase a newly constructed dwelling or new manufactured housing unit under Section 502 [42 USC 1472] of Title V of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended, to RHS concerning alleged defects in the construction of their dwelling or unit. In addition, it serves as a request for formal assistance from the Agency to aid the borrower in obtaining corrective relief from the builder/warrantor of the property. Complaints can be made to the RHS Program Director in writing or orally.

It is estimated that 100 complaints are received annually.

Notice of Non-Compliance from Borrower to RHS

Non-compliance in this subpart refers to the builders or dealer/contractor's inability or unwillingness to correct construction defects. Non-compliance also refers to the builders or dealer/contractor's failure to respond to the request for repairs. This serves as notice to RHS that the borrower's attempt to resolve the discrepancies with the builder/dealer/contractor has been unsuccessful. This notification is made by the borrower to the local RHS county office which services the loan.

Of the estimated 100 complaints received annually, approximately 20 percent, or 20, need intervention by the Rural Housing Service.

Reporting Requirements – Forms

Form RD 1924-4 "Documentation of Construction Complaint/Request for Compensation for Construction Defects"

This form is completed by the borrower with the assistance of the Rural Housing Staff and submitted as an application for assistance. This establishes formal communication between the applicant and RHS. It allows the Agency to determine the borrower's eligibility, provides a description of the defects for

which compensation is requested, the type of assistance requested, the action to be taken against the contractor, and amount of claim.

Of the estimated 20 complaints which require RHS intervention, approximately 25 percent will not be satisfactorily resolved. Thus, it is estimated that approximately 5 borrowers will actually complete this form.

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.

The use of automated, electronic, and mechanical or technological collection techniques is not applicable to this type of collection nor would these techniques assist us in reducing the burden to the public. This is collected by paper form.

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.

A review of the procedure to identify possible areas of duplication was completed. Similar information is not collected at any time during the loan making or servicing process; therefore, duplication is not a problem.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (item 5 of OMB Form 83-1), describe any methods used to minimize burden.

Similar information from other sources cannot be substituted for information needed as described in item 2. The information required by this regulation places no burden on small businesses or other small entities beyond that performed in the course of normal business.

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

The collection of information is the minimum necessary to conform to the requirements of program regulations. Without the collection of such information, RHS would be unable to assure that eligible borrowers would receive compensation to repair defects to their newly constructed dwellings, as well as maintain the market value of the property serving as security for the Section 502 loan.

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

- a. Requiring respondents to report information more than quarterly.

There are no information requirements that require reporting on more than a quarterly basis.

- b. Requiring written responses in less than 30 days.

There are no time frames established in the regulation for the information collection.

- c. Requiring more than an original and two copies.

There are no specific information collection requirements for more than an original and two copies.

- d. Requiring respondents to retain records for more than 3 years.

There are no such requirements.

- e. Not utilizing statistical sampling.

There are no such requirements.

- f. Requiring use of statistical sampling which has not been reviewed and approved by OMB.

No such requirement exists.

- g. Requiring a pledge of confidentiality.

There are no such requirements.

- h. Requiring submission of proprietary trade secrets.

There are no such requirements.

8. If applicable, identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the agency's notice soliciting comments on the information collection. Summarize public comments received and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. 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, reporting format (if any), and on data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

The 60-day notice was published in the Federal Register on June 24, 2022 [Vol. 87, No. 121, page number 37819] and no comments were received.

RHS consulted with the following outside sources to discuss the question of whether the burden is reasonable, necessary, and kept to a minimum:

- (1) Rural Community Assistance Corporation
- (2) Self Help Homes
- (3) National Council on Agricultural Life & Labor Research Fund, Inc

The feedback received was unanimous in that all three stakeholders felt the required program paperwork was minimal and necessary for the agency to gather the information needed to process a construction defect claim. Additionally, the comment was made that there seemed to be a lack of communication from the State Office regarding the processing of at least one claim. Staff training could be of value given the infrequency of processing claims in the defect program.

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

There will be no payment or gift to respondents.

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

This information collection does not require confidentiality. Rural Development (RD) does support the maintenance of confidentiality when appropriate. The Agency published a Privacy Act of 1974, System of Records (SORN) in the Federal Register on May 14, 2019 (84 FR 21315). A copy of that document can be found at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-05-14/pdf/2019-09874.pdf>.

11. Provide additional justification for any question of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

There is no information collection of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

For details, please see attached spreadsheet. A summary of the information is provided below.

Explanation:

This submission is for 100 respondents with 125 responses and 40 burden hours. The number of respondents for burden determination was based on an estimated 100

borrowers complaining of defects. Approximately 20 percent, or 20, would require intervention by RHS.

Regulation	Number of Respondents	Total Annual Response	Hours per Response	Total Annual Hours
7 CFR Part 1924	100	125	2.5	40
Total:	100	125	2.5	40

The annual cost to the public for this collection of information is \$1,082.80. The wage rate (\$27.07) used is the average wage for all occupations according to the 2020 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates (most recent data).

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information.

a. Total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life).

There are no start-up costs involved.

b. Total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component.

There are no start-up costs involved.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal Government.

RHS estimates the cost to the Federal Government to administer this program to be \$7,989.75 per year. This cost includes the salary expense for Government employees involved in the information collection process.

This figure was obtained by calculating the hourly salaries for a GS-13 employee and a GS-11 employee as an average for those working on the project. The figures are based on the estimate of time spent by each employee handling the case (GS-11 / 2.5 hours, GS-13 / 1.25 hours) for 20 cases. The salary cost for the GS-13 employee is \$69.73 per hour and the GS-11 employee is \$48.93 per hour. Both hourly rates include 36.25% for benefits. We are also including \$1,500 for training costs and \$2,300 for any publishing and supplies cost for the program.

GS-13 Employee	\$1,743.25
GS-11 Employees	\$2,446.50
Training	\$1,500

Publishing and Supplies	\$2,300
Total Cost:	\$7,989.75

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-1.

There was no change in number of respondents and burden hours since previous submission. Program use has been very constant over the last three years and continues to be stable.

16. For collection of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication.

The collection of information will not be published.

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.

These forms are used in other Rural Development information collections; therefore, it is not practical to include an OMB expiration date because of the different expiration dates for each collection. RHS is seeking approval to not display the OMB expiration date on these forms.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in item 19 on OMB 83-1.

There are no exceptions requested.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

This information collection does not employ statistical methods.