

**Federal Trade Commission Supporting Statement  
for the Automotive Fuel Ratings, Certification and Posting Rule  
("Fuel Rating Rule")  
16 C.F.R. Part 306  
OMB Control No. 3084-0068**

The Federal Trade Commission ("FTC" or "Commission") requests approval for a three-year extension of an existing clearance relating to the disclosure and reporting requirements under the Automotive Fuel Ratings, Certification and Posting Rule ("Fuel Rating Rule"). There is no change in the instrument collection.

**(1) Necessity for Collecting the Information**

The Fuel Rating Rule establishes standard procedures for determining, certifying, and disclosing the octane rating of automotive gasoline and the automotive fuel rating of alternative liquid automotive fuels, as required by the Petroleum Marketing Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 2822(a)-(c). The Rule also requires refiners, producers, importers, distributors, and retailers to retain records showing how the ratings were determined, including delivery tickets or letters of certification.

The Rule further requires producers, importers, distributors, and retailers of alternative fuels to keep for one year records of any delivery tickets, letters of certification, or tests upon which they based the automotive fuel ratings that they certified or posted. These records must be available for inspection by Commission and Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") staff members or by persons authorized by the Commission or EPA.

**(2) Use of the Information**

By knowing as accurately as possible both the octane or fuel rating requirements of their cars and the associated rating of what they buy at the pump, consumers simultaneously can save money, conserve energy, reduce air pollution, and protect their cars against possible engine damage.

The information that must be kept under the Rule's recordkeeping requirements is used by Commission or EPA staff, or by persons authorized by the FTC or EPA. Authorized persons check the records for enforcement purposes to ensure the accuracy of automotive fuel rating representations. The information is sought on a case-by-case or spot check basis.

The primary purpose of the recordkeeping requirement is to preserve evidence of automotive fuel rating certification from refiners through the chain of distribution. Without records of how the rating of the automotive fuel was represented when the transfer was made, it would be impossible to trace cases of a rating overstatement from the point of detection at the retail level back upstream to an offending distributor or refiner.

**(3) Consideration of the Use of Improved Information Technology to Reduce Burden**

The Rule permits the use of any technologies that industry members may wish to employ and that may reduce the burden of information collection. The Rule's certification and posting requirements are tailored to take advantage of existing industry practices in order to minimize the compliance burden. Certifications can be made on computer-generated delivery documents, resulting in savings of considerable time and labor. As noted above, certification can be

accomplished in either of two ways: on a delivery ticket with each transfer of fuel or by a certification letter or other written statement, which may be sent and stored electronically.

Although nothing in the Rule requires that these certifications contain any signature (see § 306.6), to the extent such a certification may typically involve a signature, the Rule leaves certifying parties free to use whatever technology they deem appropriate to identify and authenticate such signatures, consistent with the Government Paperwork Elimination Act, P.L. 105-277, Title XVII, 112 Stat. 2681-749 (GPEA). Likewise, the Rule complies with GPEA by permitting certain disclosures to be made (see § 306.5) and necessary records to be kept (see §§ 306.7, 306.9, 306.11) without regard to format, so that a regulated entity, if it chooses, may conduct these activities electronically.

Notwithstanding the GPEA, it would be impracticable and incompatible with the purpose of the Rule to permit the use of electronic mail or other electronic option to substitute for the automotive fuel rating labels (see §306.12) that retailers must post on the face of each fuel pump. These disclosures must be made to the consumer at the pump. Nothing in this labeling requirement, however, expressly prohibits the label itself from being electronically displayed if it otherwise satisfies the typeface, color, size, and durability requirements of the Rule.

#### **(4) Efforts to Identify Duplication**

Commission staff has not identified any other federal statutes, rules, or policies that would duplicate the Rule.

#### **(5) Efforts to Minimize Burden on Small Organizations**

The Rule's rating certification requirements are designed to impose the minimum possible burden on industry members. The certification of an automotive fuel rating by a refiner to a distributor or by a distributor to a retailer may be made on any document that is used as written proof of transfer or a letter or any other written statement. These fuel transfer documents were already retained by refiners, distributors, and retailers in the ordinary course of business. To further minimize the certification and recordkeeping requirements, the Rule permits an automotive fuel rating certification to be provided by means of a one-time letter of certification, obviating the need for individual certifications on each delivery ticket. This one-time letter could remain effective for a number of years, and its retention would constitute compliance with the Rule's recordkeeping requirements.

#### **(6) Consequences of Conducting Collection Less Frequently**

The fundamental disclosure required by the Rule involves posting the octane rating of automotive gasoline and the automotive fuel rating of alternative liquid automotive fuels at retail sale. This requires accurate rating and certification of these fuels. To do less would fail to fulfill the PMPA's statutory mandate.

**(7) Circumstances Requiring Collection Inconsistent With Guidelines**

The collection of information in this Rule is consistent with the guidelines stated in 5 C.F.R. § 1320.5(d)(2).

**(8) Public Comments/Consultation Outside the Agency**

On May 2, 2023, the FTC sought public comment on the disclosure and recordkeeping requirements associated with the Rule. 88 Fed. Reg. 27,514. No relevant comments were received.

Pursuant to the OMB regulations, 5 C.F.R. Part 1320, that implement the PRA, 44 U.S.C. § 3501 et seq., the FTC is providing this second opportunity for public comment while seeking OMB approval to renew the pre-existing clearance for the Rule.

**(9) Payments or Gifts to Respondents**

Not applicable.

**(10) & (11) Assurances of Confidentiality/Matters of a Sensitive Nature**

The Rule requirements for which the Commission seeks OMB approval do not involve collection or disclosure of confidential or otherwise sensitive information.

**(12) Hours of Burden and Associated Labor Costs**

**Estimated annual burden hours:** 31,976 (derived from 13,043 recordkeeping hours added to 18,933 disclosure hours).

Recordkeeping: Based on industry sources, staff estimates that approximately 156,515 fuel industry members<sup>1</sup> each incur an average annual burden of approximately five minutes to ensure retention of relevant business records<sup>2</sup> for the period required by the Rule, resulting in a total of 13,043 hours.

Disclosure: Staff estimates that affected industry members incur an average burden of approximately one hour to produce, distribute, and post octane rating labels. Because the labels are

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<sup>1</sup> Staff derived the number of fuel industry members by adding the number of refiners, producers, importers, distributors, and retailers of these types of fuel. Staff consulted government agencies and industry sources in estimating a population of approximately 156,515 fuel industry members, including 151,463 retailers of automotive fuel. Some of the government websites reviewed to update these numbers include: [http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/pet\\_pnp\\_cap1\\_dc\\_u\\_nus\\_a.htm](http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/pet_pnp_cap1_dc_u_nus_a.htm) (Gasoline Producers); <http://www.eia.gov/biofuels/biodiesel/production/> (Biodiesel Producers); <http://www.afdc.energy.gov/fuels/> (Alternative Fuel Stations); [http://www.nacsonline.com/YourBusiness/FuelsReports/2015/Documents/2015-NACS-Fuels-Report\\_full.pdf](http://www.nacsonline.com/YourBusiness/FuelsReports/2015/Documents/2015-NACS-Fuels-Report_full.pdf) (Petroleum Stations).

<sup>2</sup> Under the Fuel Rating Rule, refiners, producers, importers, distributors, and retailers of automotive fuel must retain, for one year, records of any delivery tickets, letters of certification, or tests upon which they based the automotive fuel ratings that they certify or post. See the Fuel Rating Rule's recordkeeping requirements, 16 CFR 306.7; 306.9; and 306.11.

durable, only about one of every eight industry member retailers (18,933 of 151,463 industry member retailers) incur this burden each year, resulting in a total annual burden of 18,933 hours.

**Estimated annual labor costs:** \$481,374.<sup>3</sup>

Labor costs are derived by applying appropriate hourly cost figures to the burden hours described above. Here, the average hourly wages of refiners, producers, distributors, and importers is \$38.84.<sup>4</sup> The average hourly wages of retailers is \$14.73.<sup>5</sup> The recordkeeping component, 13,043 hours, consists of approximately 430 hours for producers, distributors, and importers; and 12,613 hours for retailers. Thus, the total annual labor cost for recordkeeping is \$202,491 ((430 hours x \$38.84/hour) + (12,613 hours x \$14.73/hour)). The disclosure component, which concerns retailers, is approximately 18,933 hours. Thus, total annual labor cost for disclosure is \$278,883(18,933 hours x \$14.73/hour).

### **(13) Estimated Annual Capital and/or Other Non-labor Related Costs**

Staff believes that the Rule does not impose any capital costs for producers, importers, or distributors of fuels. Retailers, however, incur the cost of procuring and replacing fuel dispenser labels to comply with the Rule. Staff conservatively estimates that the price per automotive fuel label is \$2.77 and that the average automotive fuel retailer has six dispensers; thus, \$16.62 labeling cost at inception per retailer.<sup>6</sup> Staff has previously estimated a dispenser useful life range of 6 to 10 years and based on that, assumed a useful life of 8 years for labels, the mean of that range. Given that, replacement labeling will not be necessary for well beyond the relevant period at issue, *i.e.*, the immediate 3-year PRA clearance sought. However, conservatively annualizing the \$16.62 labeling cost at inception per retailer over that shorter period rather than average useful life, annualized labeling cost per retailer will be \$5.54. Cumulative labeling cost would thus be \$104,888 (151,463 retailers × 1/8<sup>7</sup> x \$5.54 each, annualized).

### **(14) Estimate of Cost to Federal Government**

Staff estimates that a representative year's cost of administering the Rule's requirements during the 3-year clearance period sought will be approximately \$25,000. This represents 0.15 of an attorney/economist work year, and includes employee benefits.

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<sup>3</sup> The hourly wage rates are updated from the 60-Day Federal Register notice and are based on mean hourly wages found at <http://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag211.htm#earnings> for petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers and <http://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag447.htm> for service station attendants. See [Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022 Occupational Employment Statistics](#) for more details.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag211.htm#earnings> (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022 Occupational Employment Statistics, Hourly mean wages for petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers).

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag447.htm> (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022 Occupational Employment Statistics, Hourly mean wages for service station attendants).

<sup>6</sup> See 75 FR 12,470, 12,477 (Mar. 16, 2010) (proposed rulemaking) (estimating the price range per pump to be one to two dollars). Then you factor in inflation since 2010. See [https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>7</sup> On average, each label needs to be replaced once every 8 years. Annualizing this cost equates to 1/8 or 0.125.

**(15) Adjustments/Changes in Burden**

There is slight adjustment downward for the estimated annual hours of burden (31,976 hours in 2023 and 32,907 hours in 2020) and an upward adjustment for the annual labor costs (\$481,374 in 2023 and \$389,646 in 2020).

**(16) Statistical Use of Information**

There are no plans to publish for statistical use any information the Rule requires.

**(17) Requested Permission Not to Display the Expiration Date for OMB Approval**

Not applicable.

**(18) Exceptions to the Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions**

Not applicable.