

BILLING CODE: 3410-15-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

[Docket No. RUS-23-Telecom-0012]

**60-Day Notice of Proposed Information Collection: Electric System Emergency
Restoration Plan; OMB Control No.: 0572-0140**

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Utilities Service (RUS) announces its' intention to request an extension of a currently approved information collection and invites comments on this information collection.

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER] to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted by the Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and, in the "Search Field" box, labeled "Search for docket and documents on agency actions," enter the following docket number: (RUS-23-Telecom-0012), and click "Search." To submit public comments, select the "Comment" button. Before inputting your comments, you may also review the "Commenter's Checklist" (optional). Insert your comments under the "Comment" title, click "Browse" to attach files (if applicable). Input your email address and select an

identity category then click “Submit Comment.” Information on using *Regulations.gov*, including instructions for accessing documents, submitting comments, and viewing the docket after the close of the comment period, is available through the site’s “FAQ” link.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Crystal Pemberton, Management Analyst, Branch 1, Rural Development Innovation Center – Regulations Management Division, United States Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 260-8621. Email: Crystal.Pemberton@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) regulation (5 CFR part 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104–13) requires that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities (see, 5 CFR 1320.8(d)). This notice identifies the following information collection that RUS is submitting to OMB as extension to an existing collection with Agency adjustment.

Title: Electric System Emergency Restoration Plan.

OMB Control Number: 0572-0140.

Expiration Date of Approval: March 31, 2024.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average .5 hour per response.

Respondents: Not-for-profit institutions.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 41.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 20.5 hours.

Abstract: USDA Rural Development administers rural utilities programs through the Rural Utilities Service (Agency). The Agency manages loan programs in accordance with the Rural Electrification Act (RE Act) of 1936, 7 U.S.C. 901 et seq., as amended. One of the Agency's main objectives is to safeguard loan security. An important part of safeguarding loan security is to make sure Agency financed facilities are utilized responsibly, adequately operated, and maintained. Accordingly, RUS borrowers have a duty to RUS to maintain their respective systems. In performing this duty, borrowers further the purposes of the RE Act while also preserving the value of electric systems to serve as collateral for repayment of RUS assistance.

A substantial portion of the electric infrastructure of the United States resides in rural America and is maintained by rural Americans. RUS is uniquely coupled with the electric infrastructure of rural America and its electric borrowers serving rural America. To ensure that the electric infrastructure in rural America is adequately protected, electric borrowers conduct a Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (VRA) of their respective systems and utilize the results of this assessment to enhance an existing Emergency Restoration Plan (ERP) or to create an ERP. The VRA is utilized to identify specific assets and infrastructure owned or served by the electric utility, to determine the criticality and the risk level associated with the assets and infrastructure including a risk versus cost analysis, to identify threats and vulnerabilities, if present, to review existing mitigation procedures and to assist in the development of new and additional mitigating procedures, if necessary. The ERP provides written procedures detailing response and

restoration efforts in the event of a major system outage resulting from a natural or man-made disaster. The annual exercise of the ERP ensures operability and employee competency and serves to identify and correct deficiencies in the existing ERP. The exercise may be implemented individually by a single borrower, or by an individual borrower as a participant in a multi-party (to include utilities, government agencies and other participants or combination thereof) tabletop execution or actual implementation of the ERP.

Electric borrowers maintain ERPs as part of prudent utilities practices. These ERPs are essential to continuous operation of the electric systems. Each electric applicant provides RUS with a written self-certification letter form that an ERP exists for the system and that an initial VRA has been performed as part of the application process.

Comments are invited on:

(a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. All

responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will become a matter of public record.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Crystal Pemberton, Rural Development Innovation Center – Regulations Management Division, at (202) 260-8621. Email: Crystal.Pemberton@usda.gov.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Andrew Berke,
Administrator,
Rural Utilities Service.