

Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission

AGENCY: Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation

TITLE: Duties of Plan Sponsor Following Mass Withdrawal (29 CFR part 4281)

STATUS: Request for modification of currently-approved collection of information (OMB control number 1212-0032; expires June 30, 2025)

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1. Need for collection. Section 4281 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) provides rules for multiemployer pension plans that have terminated by mass withdrawal under section 4041A of ERISA. Under section 4281, if the annual valuation of a plan shows that plan assets are not sufficient to satisfy all nonforfeitable benefits under the plan, the plan sponsor must amend the plan to eliminate benefits that are not eligible for PBGC's guarantee to the extent necessary to ensure that plan assets are sufficient (as determined and certified in accordance with PBGC regulations) for all remaining nonforfeitable benefits (subsection (c)). If, after such an amendment, the plan becomes insolvent (*i.e.*, unable to pay benefits when due for a plan year), the plan sponsor must suspend benefits in excess of guaranteed benefits to the extent that their payment cannot be supported by the plan's available resources. If the plan's available resources are inadequate to pay guaranteed benefits, the plan sponsor must request financial assistance from PBGC.¹

Section 4281 also requires PBGC to issue regulations governing the exercise of the plan sponsor's powers and duties thereunder (subsection (d)(3)). In addition, section 4041A(f)(2) of ERISA authorizes PBGC to prescribe such reporting requirements and other rules and standards

¹ See 29 CFR § 4245(f); 29 CFR part 4261.

for administering terminated plans as it considers appropriate to protect plan participants and beneficiaries or to prevent unreasonable loss to PBGC.

The regulation allows a plan sponsor to combine the notice of insolvency and notice of insolvency benefit level. The plan sponsor provides an updated notice to participant and beneficiaries only if there is a change in the amount of benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries. These rules are necessary to assure the consistency and adequate quality of notices required by law and to enable PBGC to provide financial assistance to terminated plans in a timely manner.

2. Use of information.

a. Information required. PBGC's regulation on Duties of Plan Sponsor Following Mass Withdrawal (29 CFR part 4281) implements the requirements of section 4281. The regulation prescribes rules under which plan sponsors must: (1) give notices of benefit reduction (*i.e.*, of the adoption of a plan amendment reducing benefits) to PBGC and to participants and beneficiaries, and a notice to PBGC of any restoration of benefits (§§ 4281.32 and 4281.33); (2) give notices to PBGC and to participants and beneficiaries that a plan is, or will be, insolvent (§§ 4281.43 and 4281.44); (3) give notices of insolvency benefit level to PBGC and to participants and beneficiaries (§§ 4281.45 and 4281.46); and (4) submit an application to PBGC for financial assistance if a plan is, or will be, unable to pay guaranteed benefits when due (§ 4281.47).

b. Need for information. PBGC uses the information it receives to make determinations required by ERISA, to identify and estimate the cash needed for financial assistance to terminated plans, and to verify the appropriateness of financial assistance payments. Plan participants and beneficiaries use the information to make personal financial decisions.

3. Information technology. PBGC requires notices of insolvency and insolvency benefit level and applications for financial assistance to be filed electronically with PBGC.

4. Duplicate or similar information. To avoid duplication, plan sponsors may note the date of a prior submission to PBGC of identical information, rather than requiring submission. In addition, duplication is avoided by allowing the notice of insolvency to be combined with the notice of insolvency benefit level and by eliminating most annual updates to the notice of insolvency benefit level.

5. Reducing the burden on small entities. Inapplicable.

6. Consequence of less frequent reporting. PBGC needs an early warning of threatened insolvency and its consequent impact on benefit payments to be able to estimate PBGC's cash needs to provide financial assistance to insolvent terminated plans. Once a plan sponsor determines that an insolvency situation may arise, a lack of expeditious notification or application could delay PBGC assistance. Delay in notification may also interfere with the financial decisions of participants and beneficiaries and delay their search for alternative income sources. Further, without this regulation, the notices required by section 4281 of ERISA would be inconsistently given and of varying quality, as plan sponsors applied their individual interpretations of the law.

7. Consistency with guidelines. The information collection is conducted in a manner consistent with 5 CFR § 1320.5(d)(2).

8. Outside input. On March 10, 2025, PBGC published a 60-day notice (at 90 FR 11630) of its intent to request an extension of this collection of information, as revised, and invited public comment by May 9, 2025. No comments were received.

9. Payments and gifts. No payments or gifts were made to respondents in connection with this collection of information.

10. Confidentiality. Confidentiality of information is that afforded by the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act. PBGC's rules that provide and restrict access to its records are set forth in 29 CFR parts 4901 and 4902, respectively.

11. Personal questions. The collection of information does not call for submission of information of a sensitive or personal nature.

12. Hour burden on the public. Based on experience, PBGC expects to receive the following notices under this section per year for each of the next three years: 1 notice of benefit reduction; 2 notices of insolvency; 2 combined notices of insolvency and insolvency benefit level; 3 notices of insolvency benefit level; 5 initial applications for financial assistance; and 369 non-initial applications for financial assistance. This is a total of 382 notices per year.

PBGC has never received a benefit restoration notice, and none are expected, as most insufficient mass-withdrawal-terminated plans become insolvent over time and, once insolvent, do not regain solvency.

PBGC estimates that the average plan subject to the regulation covers 1,000 participants, about 700 of whom are in pay status. Based on plan experience, PBGC assumes that the notice of benefit reduction and applications for financial assistance are prepared by attorneys.

The notice of benefit reduction, notice of insolvency, the combined notice of insolvency and insolvency benefit level, and the notice of insolvency benefit level are prepared by outside attorneys and actuaries using information compiled by the plan office and are distributed by the plan office. The time to prepare and distribute the notices can vary significantly by plan size.

PBGC estimates that a plan office will spend approximately 1 hour compiling information for the

notice and distribution of the notice of benefit reduction. PBGC estimates that a plan office will spend approximately 16.0 hours compiling information for the other notices and their distribution. The estimated hour burden is 1 hour for the notice of benefit reduction, 32 hours for the notice of insolvency, 32 hours for the combined notice, and 48 hours for the notice of insolvency benefit level.

The total estimated hourly burden is 113 hours (1+32+32+48). The estimated dollar equivalent of this hour burden, based on an assumed blended hourly rate of \$75 for administrative, clerical, and supervisory time is \$8,475.

13. Cost burden on the public. Based on the assumption that the average multiemployer plan subject to this regulation has about 1,000 participants, about 700 of whom are in pay status, and that the notices and applications are prepared by a combination of attorneys and actuaries, PBGC estimates the cost to prepare and file each notice or application as follows:

1. For a notice of benefit reduction (1 per year): The burden associated with a notice of benefit reduction would be 1 hour of professional time at a cost of \$400.
2. For a notice of insolvency (2 per year), a combined notice of insolvency and insolvency benefit level (2 per year) and a notice of insolvency benefit level (3 per year): The cost of attorney and actuary time to prepare the notices varies significantly by plan size from \$2,500 to \$26,000. PBGC estimates that the cost of preparing each notice is \$10,000 per plan. PBGC estimates that the annual cost of preparing the notices is \$70,000.
3. For an initial application for financial assistance (5 per year): \$10,000 per application, or a total of \$50,000.
4. For non-initial applications for financial assistance (369 per year): \$400 per application, or a total of \$147,600.

Therefore, the estimated annual cost burden of the collection of information is \$268,000.

14. Cost to the government. PBGC estimates that the total annual cost to the government is \$0.

15. Explanation of burden changes. The change in the estimated annual burden of this collection of information results from using an updated average number of filings actually received in the period from 2022 through 2024. PBGC estimates that the annual hour burden will decrease from 241 hours to 113 hours and the annual cost burden will decrease from \$420,400 to \$268,000.

16. Publication. There are no plans for tabulation or publication.

17. Display of expiration date. PBGC is not seeking approval to avoid displaying the expiration date for OMB approval of this information collection.

18. Exceptions to certification statement. There are no exceptions to the certification statement.