

[6450-01-P]

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

U.S. Energy Information Administration

Agency Information Collection Proposed Extension

AGENCY: U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Department of Energy (DOE).

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: EIA invites public comment on the proposed three-year extension, with changes, to the Generic Clearance for Questionnaire Testing, Evaluation, and Research, as required under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. EIA-882T, *Generic Clearance for Questionnaire Testing, Evaluation, and Research*, provides EIA with the authority to utilize qualitative and quantitative methodologies to pretest questionnaires and validate the quality of data collected on EIA's surveys. EIA uses EIA-882T to meet its obligation to publish, and otherwise make available independent, high-quality statistical data to federal government agencies, state and local governments, the energy industry, researchers, and the general public.

DATES: EIA must receive all comments on this proposed information collection no later than **[INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*]**. If you anticipate any difficulties in submitting your comments by the deadline, contact the person listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice as soon as possible.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, identified by OMB control number 1905–0186, by email at *EIA-FRNcomments@eia.gov*. Include the OMB control number listed in the subject line of the message.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kenneth Pick, EIA Clearance

Officer, at (202) 586-5562.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This information collection request contains:

(1) *OMB No.:* 1905-0186;

(2) *Information Collection Request Title:* Generic Clearance for Questionnaire Testing, Evaluation, and Research;

(3) *Type of Request:* Three-year extension with changes;

(4) *Purpose:* The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) is requesting a three-year approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to utilize qualitative and quantitative methodologies to pretest questionnaires and validate the quality of the data that are collected on EIA and DOE survey forms. Through the use of these methodologies, EIA will conduct research studies to improve the quality of energy data being collected, reduce or minimize survey respondent burden, and increase agency efficiency. This authority would also allow EIA to improve data collection in order to meet the needs of EIA's customers while also staying current in the evolving nature of the energy industry.

The specific methods EIA will continue to use for the coverage by this clearance are described below.

Pilot Surveys. Pilot surveys conducted under this clearance will generally be methodological studies and will always employ statistically representative samples. The pilot surveys will replicate all components of the methodological design, sampling procedures (where possible), and questionnaires of the full-scale survey. Pilot surveys

will normally be utilized when EIA undertakes a complete redesign of a particular data collection methodology or when EIA undertakes data collection in new energy areas of the energy sector where data collection would provide utility to EIA.

Cognitive Interviews. Cognitive interviews are typically one-on-one interviews in which the respondent is usually asked to "think aloud" or is asked "retrospective questions" as they answer questions, reads survey materials, defines terminology, or completes other activities as part of a typical survey process. A number of different techniques may be involved including asking respondents what specific words or phrases mean or asking respondents probing questions to determine how they estimate, calculate, or determine specific data elements on a survey. The objectives of these cognitive interviews are to identify problems of ambiguity or misunderstanding, examine the process that respondents follow for reporting information, assess survey respondents' ability to report new information, or identify other difficulties respondents have answering survey questions in order to reduce measurement error from estimates based on a survey.

Respondent Debriefings. Respondent debriefings conducted under this clearance will generally be methodological or cognitive research studies. The debriefing form is administered after a respondent completes a questionnaire either in paper format, electronically, or through personal interviews. The debriefings contain probing questions to determine how respondents interpret the survey questions, how much time and effort was spent completing the questionnaire, and whether they have problems in completing the survey/questionnaire. Respondent debriefings also are useful in determining potential issues with data quality and in estimating respondent burden.

Usability Testing. Usability tests are similar to cognitive interviews in which a respondent is typically asked to “think aloud” or asked “retrospective questions” as they review a survey questionnaire, related materials, or website. The objective of usability testing is to check that respondents can easily and intuitively navigate survey questionnaires, related materials, and websites to submit their data to EIA.

Focus Groups. Focus groups are a qualitative method used early in questionnaire development to gather information about a topic that can later be used to write survey questions, such as specific terminology, definitions, sensitivity of topics, organizational processes, and burden associated with reporting. Information is collected by a moderator using a guided discussion with small groups of people (*e.g.*, 8-10).

Field Techniques. Field techniques described in survey research and survey methodology literature will be employed as appropriate. These include follow-up probing, memory cue tasks, paraphrasing, confidence rating, response latency measurements, free and dimensional sort classification tasks, and vignette classifications. The objective of all of these techniques is to aid in the development of surveys that work with respondents’ thought processes, thus reducing response error and burden. These techniques have also proven useful for studying and revising pre-existing questionnaires.

Behavior Coding. Behavior coding is a quantitative technique in which a standard set of codes is systematically applied to respondent / interviewer interactions in interviewer-administered surveys or respondent / questionnaire interactions in self-administered surveys.

Split Panel Test. Split panel tests refer to controlled experimental testing of alternative hypotheses. Thus, they allow one to choose from among competing questions,

questionnaires, definitions, error messages or survey improvement methodologies with greater confidence than any of the other methods. Split panel tests conducted during the fielding of the survey are superior in that they can support both internal validity (controlled comparisons of the variable(s) under investigation) and external validity (represent the population under study). Most of the previously mentioned survey improvement methods can be strengthened when teamed with this method.

(4a) Proposed Changes to Information Collection:

EIA proposes to collect personally identifiable information (PII) only to the extent necessary to recruit participants for questionnaire testing, evaluation, and research. This PII would not be retained, with the exception of information needed to provide remuneration for participants of questionnaire testing, evaluation, and research and conduct associated data analysis.

(5) Annual Estimated Number of Respondents: 7,500;

(6) Annual Estimated Number of Total Responses: 7,500;

(7) Annual Estimated Number of Burden Hours: 7,500;

(8) Annual Estimated Reporting and Recordkeeping Cost Burden: \$683,700 (7,500 annual burden hours multiplied by \$91.16 per hour). EIA estimates that respondents will have no additional costs associated with the surveys other than the burden hours and the maintenance of the information during the normal course of business.

Comments are invited on whether or not: (a) The proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of agency functions, including whether the information will have a practical utility; (b) EIA's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions

used, is accurate; (c) EIA can improve the quality, utility, and clarity of the information it will collect; and (d) EIA can minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, such as automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Statutory Authority: 15 U.S.C. 772(b) and 42 U.S.C. 7101 *et seq.*

Signed in Washington, DC, on **(insert date)**.

Samson Adeshiyan
Director,
Office of Statistical Methods and Research
U.S. Energy Information Administration