

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration**  
**Emergency Beacon Registrations**  
**OMB Control No. 0648-0295**

## **Abstract**

This is a request for a revision and extension of a currently approved information collection. The forms are being updated in response to the development of 406MHz second generation beacons (SGBs), of which Emergency Locator Transmitters (ELTs) are currently available to the public and other types are projected to be approved by 2026. Additionally, feedback was received from the United States Mission Control Center (MCC) and Rescue Coordination Centers (RCCs) to ensure as much information as possible is available during an activation of an emergency beacon. On the Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) form which is used for both watercraft and aircraft, the updates gather additional data regarding the vessel/aircraft where the PLB is to be used. It increases the data available during an activation of the PLB and can assist in determining false alerts quicker. Additionally, all four registration forms are being updated to streamline wording, update the instructions, and add the beacon registration email address (beacon.registration@noaa.gov).

## **JUSTIFICATION**

**1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.**

The United States, Canada, France and Russia operate Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (COSPAS<sup>1</sup>/SARSAT), a satellite system with equipment that can detect and locate ships, aircraft and individuals in distress if an emergency radio beacon is being carried. This system is used to detect digitally encoded signals in the 406.000-406.100 MHz range, coming from these emergency beacons. The 406.000-406.100 MHz beacons transmit a unique identifier, making possible the ability to combine previously collected data associated with that beacon and transmit this vital data along with the beacon's position to the appropriate rescue coordination center.

Persons buying 406.000-406.100 MHz emergency radio beacons are required to register them with the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) prior to installation. These requirements are contained in Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations at [47 CFR 80.1061<sup>2</sup>](#), [47 CFR 87.199<sup>3</sup>](#) and [47 CFR 95.2993<sup>4</sup>](#).

The registration data is used to facilitate a rescue and to suppress the costly consequences of false alerts, which if unsuppressed would initiate the launch of a rescue mission and thereby deplete limited resources and possibly result in the loss of lives. This is accomplished through the use of

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<sup>1</sup> Cosmicheskaya Sistyema Poiska Aariynyich Sudov, which loosely translates into: "The Space System for the Search of Vessels in Distress".

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-80/subpart-V/section-80.1061>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-87/subpart-F/subject-group-ECFR6fcc8bcf0e9c0fa/section-87.199>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-95/subpart-K/section-95.2993>

the data provided to the rescue forces from the beacon registration database maintained by NOAA's United States Mission Control Center (USMCC) for Search and Rescue to contact the distressed person(s) or alternate party via a phone call or radio broadcast. Other data provides rescuers with descriptive material of the element in distress. The registration information must be kept up-to-date.

Four registration forms are used: 1) The EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) form is used for nautical beacons; 2) The ELT (Emergency Locator Transmitter) form is used for aircraft beacons; 3) The PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) form is used to register portable beacons carried by individuals; and 4) Ship Security Alerting System (SSAS) beacons are carried aboard ships, are similar to EPIRBs and are used in the event of an emergency situation such as piracy or terrorism.

The PLB form, used for both watercraft and aircraft, is being updated to allow the collection and sharing of additional data with search and rescue (SAR) forces in order to aid in a successful SAR response. If the user checks that their "VEHICLE TYPE" is "Boat", they are asked to complete the following additional fields: Vessel Name, Federal/State Registration No., Home Port Marina/Dock, City and State (ST). If the user checks that their "VEHICLE TYPE" is "Aircraft", they are asked to complete the following additional fields: Airport Code, City and State (ST). The city and state of the marina or airport is needed to help SAR forces to quickly locate the airport/marina where the aircraft/boat is stored permanently. This helps SAR forces to identify false alerts (i.e., if the beacon goes off where the aircraft/boat is stored, it is likely to be a false alert). Likewise, if a distress situation is suspected, SAR forces can call the airport/marina to get more information on the owner and the owner's whereabouts.

The EPIRB and SSAS forms were updated to have separate lines for Inmarsat number and Iridium number. Inmarsat and Iridium are both global satellite communication providers, but they utilize different satellite constellations and offer varying coverage and features. Mariners may use either option for emergency communications on board vessels and listing both options allows registered owners to select the option that is applicable to them. The EPIRB and SSAS forms were updated to have two separate lines for Inmarsat number and Iridium number.

In addition, all four forms are being updated to streamline wording, update the instructions, and add the beacon registration email address ([beacon.registration@noaa.gov](mailto:beacon.registration@noaa.gov)).

**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 required prior to the date the beacon is expected to be put in service. The information will be entered into the database within 48 hours of receipt and much faster when received on-line. Verification of the information is required on a two (2) year recurring cycle, or until the beacon is reported to have been removed from service and deactivated. Currently there are 871,406 registrations with 676,241 of those listed as "Active" (including 37,942 new ones in the past year). With renewal required every two years, we expect half (357,092) of the currently registered entities to renew each year for the next three years. Thus, each year we estimate 376,063 (338,121 renewing + 37,942 new) registrations. Data is obtained through NOAA's beacon registration database or a physical form received by the SARSAT Beacon Registration Department either by mail, email or fax.

Each entry is intended to provide rescue forces with information to assist them to either: 1) avoid the launch of a rescue mission, as in the case of an unintended beacon activation, sometimes referred to as a false alert, or 2) rapidly and efficiently execute a rescue, whether it be on land or sea. In the case of the PLB, specific questions are asked concerning whether the person plans to use the beacon while hunting, fishing, or hiking. This information also helps an emergency team to know what to look for in an emergency: someone in the mountains hunting, hurt on a trail, near a stream or lake, etc. The updated changes to the PLB form will allow for additional information to be provided to the USMCC and RCCs if the individual is using the PLB on a vessel or an aircraft. NOAA has been successfully using the information provided by registered individuals to assist in saving lives for years. The continued use of these forms with the updated data will continue to assist in life saving efforts. The updated forms allow for a great amount of information to disseminate to the SAR assets (United States Coast Guard and United States Air Force) during an emergency.

**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. Also, describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.**

Respondents may either: 1) obtain the forms electronically via the Internet at <https://beaconregistration.noaa.gov>, download, complete, sign, mail, fax or email or 2) register directly on the website, in which case the signature requirement is waived. Approximately 90% are electronic submissions.

**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 Question 2.**

The beacons, for which the FCC has mandated registration with NOAA, are specialized radio transmitters. The information, as collected from the operators of these transmitters, does not exist in its entirety anywhere else except in the NOAA database maintained by the USMCC. Purchasers are not required by law to complete a beacon manufacturer's owner warranty registration and such registrations, in any case, would not include all purchasers (beacons are often sold second-hand) nor necessarily all the vital information required in the mandated registration.

**5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.**

The collection will not have a significant impact on small entities such as small businesses, organizations, or government bodies. The burden is already minimal, at 15 minutes per registration.

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

The consequences of not having the information could delay the rescue of individuals in danger. Rescues that are delayed could result in the loss of lives. The information provided in the registration forms allow rescue center personnel to rapidly sort out the true or most likely true emergency situations from the non-emergency activations and respond accordingly. The addition of information on the PLB form is to help determine a false alert quicker.

**7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.**

This collection will be conducted in a manner consistent with OMB guidelines.

**8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.**

A Federal Register Notice, published on April 28, 2025 (90 FR 17578), solicited public comment on this renewal. No comments were received.

NOAA consulted with three stakeholders, the United States Coast Guard (USCG), the United States Air Force (USAF) and our beacon manufactures, to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure or reporting format (if any) and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported. This outreach was sent via email on June 12, 2025.

A comment from the USAF stated that the instructions on page 3 AIRCRAFT/VESSEL/USAGE INFORMATION (ELT/EPIRB & SSAS/PLB) are very confusing. It was suggested to have different instructions for each type of beacon which would allow room to space out the sections and not have a bunch of words separated by semi-colons.

This suggestion was acknowledged and was taken into consideration. The instructions were updated to allow individuals to easily find and read the information for the given emergency beacon to ensure all the correct data was provided by the owner. Each sheet was also updated to reflect page count.

An additional comment was received from the USCG. It was suggested that we add Iridium to the INMARSAT line which affected the EPIRB and SSAS forms. The EPIRB and SSAS forms were updated to have two separate lines for Inmarsat number and Iridium number.

No comments were received from the beacon manufacturers.

Closeout for comments from the stakeholders was July 23, 2025.

**9. Explain any decisions to provide payments or gifts to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.**

No payments or gifts are made.

**10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.**

No assurance of confidentiality is provided to respondents.

This information is authorized for collection under system of records notice [COMMERCE/NOAA-20](#),

Search and Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking (SARSAT) 406 MHz Emergency Beacon Registration Database. The information is stored in system NOAA5023, Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (SARSAT) and a current privacy impact assessment is available at [https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/NOAA5023%20PIA%202025-0410%20SAOP Approved.pdf](https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/NOAA5023%20PIA%202025-0410%20SAOP%20Approved.pdf).

**11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.**

No sensitive questions are asked.

**12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.**

In any given year, approximately 376,063 beacon registrations are received. These registrations may be for the EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon), the ELT (Emergency Locator Transmitter), the PLB (Personal Locator Beacon), or the Ship Security Alerting System (SSAS) beacon form.

All forms take approximately 15 minutes/response. Approximately 90% of all registrations and renewals are done online and take far less time: about 30 seconds for renewals and 5-10 minutes for new registrations, if they have the necessary information available. The 10% of new registrations or renewals that are completed offline and sent via physical mail take more time. To compensate for the different methods of response, 15 minutes was determined to be a good average. In a given year, approximately 338,121 renewals are received, along with 37,942 new registrations.

Information Collection	Type of Respondent (e.g., Occupational Title)	# of Respondents (a)	Annual # of Responses / Respondent (b)	Total # of Annual Responses (c) = (a) x (b)	Burden Hrs / Response (d)	Total Annual Burden Hrs (e) = (c) x (d)	Hourly Wage Rate (for Type of Respondent) (f)	Total Annual Wage Burden Costs (g) = (e) x (f)
Emergency Beacon Registrations	Individuals or households; Business or other for-profit organizations; Not-for-profit institutions; State, Local, or Tribal government; Federal government	376,063	1	376,063	0.25	94,016	\$ 32.52	\$3,057,400
<b>Totals</b>				<b>376,063</b>		<b>94,016</b>		<b>\$3,057,400</b>

Hourly wage was obtained from the BLS Occupational Employment Data using the mean hourly wage for Civilian Workers December 2024 due to the diverse and unknown occupations of the respondents. (<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/eccec.pdf>).

**13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to the respondents or record-**

**keepers resulting from the collection.**

There are no costs to the public associated with this information collection. Ninety percent of registrations are completed online and the remaining ten percent that are returned via mail are returned in a postage paid envelope.

**14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.**

The Federal Supervisor oversees the entire SARSAT program. This individual ensures that the department is functioning and completing work according to the contract and assists if necessary. The registration database department is managed and the day-to-day operations are conducted by contractors. These individuals filter calls to include updating and verifying information, processing the mail in submissions, the email submissions and managing data on the website. The contractors also send the registration stickers to the individuals which includes creating the label, printing the registration confirmation and then mailing it to the individuals. They can also help to provide critical information during a search and rescue emergency. There is a phone line that is managed during the working hours by the contract employees. The mail sent to individuals is where the cost for postage and envelopes is factored in.

The base salary was determined using the OPM General Schedules (<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/25Tables/html/RUS.aspx>) for a GS-14, Level 5 at the Rest of U.S. locality since NOAA employees are geographically dispersed. A multiplier of 1.5 was used to calculate the loaded salary.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Supervisor	GS-14/5	211,703	1%		\$ 2,117
Other Federal Positions					
Contractor Cost			99%		\$ 601,638
Travel					
Other Costs: Hardware & expendables					\$ 30,800
Other Costs: Postage, Envelopes					\$ 167,398
TOTAL					\$ 801,953

**15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in ROCIS.**

Each year, more and more individuals are purchasing and registering emergency beacons. With the increase in the number of registered beacons, there have been items identified that would be useful in an emergency situation which is why the forms have been updated. The forms are requesting additional information that emergency responders have been asking for. With the increase in information requested, the burden has increased slightly. Even with the increase in burden, the information is used for life saving purposes and is necessary.

Information	Respondents	Responses	Burden Hours	Reason for change or adjustment
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Collection	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	
Emergency Beacon Registration	376,063	343,808	376,063	343,808	94,016	85,952	Support and expansion of the SARSAT system has led to the continued annual increase of new and renewed registrations, resulting in an increased calculated burden since the previous submission.
Total for Collection	376,063	343,808	376,063	343,808	94,016	85,952	
Difference	32,255		32,255		8,064		

**16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions**

There is no intention to publicly disseminate or publish the information collected. The sole intended purpose for collecting the information is to assist rescue forces to efficiently and effectively carry out their life saving mission.

NOAA SARSAT Program will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA stands for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response to Question 10 of this supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet all application information quality guidelines. Although the information collected is not expected to be disseminated directly to the public, results may be used in scientific, management, technical or general informational publications. Should NOAA SARSAT program decide to disseminate the information, it will be subject to the quality control measures and pre-dissemination review pursuant to Section 515 of Public Law 106-554.

**17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be inappropriate.**

The agency plans to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on all instruments.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."**

The agency certifies compliance with [5 CFR 1320.9](#) and the related provisions of [5 CFR 1320.8\(b\)\(3\)](#).