Supporting Statement for Form SSA-723
Statement Regarding the Inferred Death of an Individual by Reason of Continued and Unexplained Absence
20 CFR 404.720-404.721
OMB No. 0960-0844

A. Justification

1. Introduction/Authoring Laws and Regulations

When an individual has been missing, or is presumed dead, we need to take certain actions before paying out benefits. Section *202(d)-(i)* of the *Social Security Act (Act)* mandates that when insured workers pass away, their surviving family members are entitled to a lump-sum death payment and monthly survivor benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA). Policies for establishing the date of death for a person who has been absent from home for at least seven years, when there is no evidence, the individual is alive are set forth in *20 CFR 404.720-404.721* of the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

2. Description of Collection

SSA requires evidence of death when determining eligibility for survivor's benefits. In most cases, a death certificate or acceptable evidence establishes that an individual has died. However, circumstances may arise in which an insured wage earner disappears, their whereabouts remain unknowns, and the person filing for survivors' benefits is unable to obtain primary or secondary evidence of death.

Before SSA can pay survivor's benefits on a missing individual declared dead, we must ensure there is no evidence indicating the individual is still alive. SSA uses Form SSA-723, the Statement Regarding the Inferred Death of an Individual by Reason of Continued and Unexpected Absence, as a last resort to collect the information we need to make a determination. In cases where insured wage earners have been absent from their homes for at least seven years, and there is no evidence these individuals are alive, SSA uses the information from Form SSA-723 to determine if we may presume a missing wage earner is deceased, and, if so, to establish a date of presumed death.

Most respondents learn about the need to complete Form SSA-723 during an interview to file a survivor's benefit application when an SSA technician explains the need to provide evidence. Respondents can also independently learn about the requirements and responsibility for providing evidence regarding eligibility for SSA programs by using a keyword search or reading the frequently asked questions on SSA's public facing website. If respondents speak with an SSA representative, the representative can begin the process by providing the link to the fillable SSA-723 which respondents can download and complete, then return to SSA.

Once SSA receives Form SSA-723, we scan the form into the claim's record as evidence.

We identified the following psychological costs based on the requirements for this information collection:

Psychological Cost #1:

- **Requirement for Program:** Form SSA-723 includes several short-answer questions which may be difficult for the respondent to complete, as they request information to help SSA determine if the missing person is missing, and whether the agency can consider them missing and deceased.
- **Psychological Cost:** Respondents may consider these questions daunting and difficult to complete, especially if they do not have answers to all of them. Respondents may also be concerned that if they are unable to answer all of the questions, SSA may not grant them survivor's benefits.

While the instructions for the form state that respondents may answer "unknown" if they are unable to answer all of the questions, we understand these psychological costs may cause respondents to delay their completion of the information collection or cause them to abandon the information collection entirely. However, we require full completion of this collection to receive benefits. Therefore, we have taken this potential psychological cost into account when calculating our burden in #12 below.

The respondents are relatives, friends, neighbors, or acquaintances of the presumed deceased wage earner, or the person who is filing for survivor's benefits.

3. Use of Information Technology to Collect the Information

Form SSA-723 is available to download as a fillable PDF on SSA's website. Respondents either mail or deliver the completed form to SSA, or they complete it with an SSA technician while visiting a field office. Once SSA receives Form SSA-723, we scan the form into the claimant's record as evidence.

SSA has not, yet, created an Internet version of this information collection, or scheduled it for implementation as a static PDF in Upload Documents, as the form currently has a low volume and we project the volume will continue to decrease. We will reassess this form if we find that use increases, and we no longer have higher priority forms which take priority for electronic implementation.

4. Why We Cannot Use Duplicate Information

The nature of the information we collect and the manner in which we collect it precludes duplication. SSA does not use another collection instrument to obtain similar data.

5. Minimizing Burden on Small Respondents

This collection does not affect small businesses or other small entities.

6. Consequence of Not Collecting Information or Collecting it Less Frequently

If we did not use Form SSA-723, we would have no means of establishing evidence for missing and presumed-dead wage earners, which would deprive their survivors of rightful

Social Security benefits. Because we only collect this information once, we cannot collect it less frequently. There are no technical or legal obstacles to burden reduction.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances that would cause SSA to conduct this information collection in a manner inconsistent with *5 CFR 1320.5*.

8. Solicitation of Public Comment and Other Consultations with the Public

The 60-day advance Federal Register Notice published on September 24, 2026, at 91 FR 60685, and we received no public comments. The 30-day FRN published on November 25, 2026, at 91 FR 76295. If we receive any comments in response to this Notice, we will forward them to OMB. We did not consult with the public about the development or revision of this form.

9. Payment or Gifts to Respondents

SSA does not provide payments or gifts to the respondents.

10. Assurances of Confidentiality

SSA protects and holds confidential the information it collects in accordance with *42 U.S.C. 1306*, *20 CFR 401* and *402, 5 U.S.C. 552* (Freedom of Information Act), *5 U.S.C. 552a* (Privacy Act of 1974), and OMB Circular No. A-130.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The information collection does not contain any questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimates of Public Reporting Burden

Please see the burden chart below:

Method of Completion	**Number of Respondents**	**Frequency of Response**	**Average Burden Per Response (minutes)**	**Estimated Total Annual Burden (hours)**	**Average Theoretical Cost Amount (dollars)***	**Average Wait Time in Field Office (minutes)****	**Total Annual Opportunity Cost (dollars) *****
SSA-723	806	1	30	403	$33.54*	20**	$22,539***

* We based this figure on an average U.S. worker's hourly wage ($33.54), as reported by Bureau of Labor Statistics data (Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics).

** We based this figure on the average October 2026 wait time for field offices (20 minutes), as captured by SSA's current management information data. This figure is also posted on our public-facing website (Social Security performance | SSA). As the figures fluctuate, the wait times may be different on the website than they appear here. While we have included wait times for all respondents who complete the paper form, we note that

respondents are not required to complete the form in person and those who mail or drop off a completed form do not experience any wait time.

*** This figure does not represent actual costs that SSA is imposing on individuals; rather, these are theoretical opportunity costs for the additional time respondents will spend to complete the information collection. **There is no actual charge to respondents to complete the information collection**.

In addition, OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) is requiring SSA to use a rough estimate of a 30-minute, one-way, drive time in our calculations of the time burden for this collection. OIRA based their estimation on a spatial analysis of SSA's current field office locations and the location of the average population centers based on census tract information, which likely represents a 13.97 mile driving distance for one-way travel. We depict this on the chart below:

Total Number of Respondents Who Visit a Field Office	**Frequency of Response**	**Average One-Way Travel Time to a Field Office (minutes)**	**Estimated Total Travel Time to a Field Office (hours)**	**Total Annual Opportunity Cost for Travel Time (dollars)******
105	1	30	53	$1,778

****We based this dollar amount on the Average Theoretical Hourly Cost Amount in dollars shown on the burden chart above.

Per OIRA, we include this travel time burden estimate under the *5 CFR 1320.8(a)(4),* which requires us to provide "time, effort, or financial resources expended by persons [for]…transmitting, or otherwise disclosing the information," as well as *5 CFR 1320.8(b)(3)(iii)* which requires us to estimate "the average burden collection…to the extent practicable." SSA notes that we do not obtain or maintain any data on travel times to a field office, nor do we have any data which shows that the average respondent drives to a field office, rather than using any other mode of transport. SSA also acknowledges that respondents' mode of travel and, therefore, travel times vary widely dependent on region, mode of travel, and actual proximity to a field office.

NOTE: We included the total opportunity cost estimate from this chart in our calculations when showing the total time and opportunity cost estimates in the paragraph below.

We calculated the following Learning Cost time burden based on the estimated time and effort we expect respondents will take to learn about this program, its applicability to their circumstances, and to cover any additional research we believe respondents may need to take to understand how to comply with the program requirements (beyond reading the instructions on the collection instrument):

Total Number of Respondents	Frequency of Response	Estimate Learning Cost (minutes)	Estimated Total Annual Burden (hours)	Total Annual Learning Cost (dollars)*****
806	1	10	134	$4,494*****

*****We based this dollar amount on the Average Theoretical Hourly Cost Amount in dollars shown on the burden chart above.

NOTE: We included the total opportunity cost estimate from this chart in our calculations when showing the total time and opportunity cost estimates in the paragraph below.

We base our burden estimates on current management information data, which includes data from actual interviews, as well as from years of conducting this information collection. Per our management information data, we believe that **30** minutes accurately shows the average burden per response for learning about the program; receiving notices as needed; reading and understanding instructions; gathering the data and documents needed; answering the questions and completing the information collection instrument; scheduling any necessary appointment or required phone call; consulting with any third parties (as needed); and waiting to speak with SSA employees (as needed). Based on our current management information data, the current burden information we provided is accurate. The total burden for this ICR is **403** burden hours (reflecting SSA management information data), which results in an associated theoretical (not actual) opportunity cost financial burden of **$28,811**. SSA does not charge respondents to complete our applications.

13. Annual Cost to the Respondents (Other)

This collection does not impose a known cost burden on the respondents.

14. Annual Cost To Federal Government

The annual cost to the Federal Government is approximately **$326,332**. This estimate accounts for costs from the following areas:

Description of Cost Factor	Methodology for Estimating Cost	Cost in Dollars*
Designing and Printing the Form	Design Cost + Printing Cost	$579
Distribution, Shipping, and Material Costs for the Form	Distribution + Shipping + Material Cost	$0*
SSA Employee (e.g., field office, 800 number, DDS staff) Information Collection and Processing Time	GS-9 employee x # of responses x processing time	$325,753
Full-Time Equivalent Costs	Out of pocket costs + Other expenses for providing this	$0*

	service	
Systems Development, Updating, and Maintenance	GS-9 employee x man hours for development, updating, maintenance	$0*
Quantifiable IT Costs	Any additional IT costs	$0*
Total		**$326,332****

* We have inserted a $0 amount for cost factors that do not apply to this collection.

SSA is unable to break down the costs to the Federal government further than we already have. However, we have calculated these costs as accurately as possible based on the information we collect for creating, updating, and maintaining these information collections.

15. Program Changes or Adjustments to the Information Collection Request

When we last cleared this IC in 2023, the burden was 1,500 hours. However, we are currently reporting a burden of 403 hours. When we cleared this IC in 2023 this was a new ICR, and we provided burden estimations based on our initial expectations. However, these updated figures represent current Management Information data.

*Note: The total burden reflected in ROCIS is **1,209**, while the burden cited in #12 of the Supporting Statement is **403**. This discrepancy is because the ROCIS burden reflects the following components: field office waiting time + telephone call system wait times + learning costs + a rough estimate of a 30-minute, one-way, drive burden. In contrast, the chart in #12 above reflects actual burden.

16. Plans for Publication Information Collection Results

SSA will not publish the results of the information collection.

17. Displaying the OMB Approval Expiration Date

OMB granted SSA an exemption from the requirement to print the OMB expiration date on its program forms. SSA produces millions of public-use forms with life cycles exceeding those of an OMB approval. Since SSA does not periodically revise and reprint its public-use forms (e.g., on an annual basis), OMB granted this exemption so SSA would not have to destroy stocks of otherwise useable forms with expired OMB approval dates, avoiding Government waste.

18. Exceptions to Certification Statement

SSA is not requesting an exception to the certification requirements at *5 CFR 1320.9* and related provisions at *5 CFR 1320.8(b)(3)*.

B. <u>Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods</u>

SSA does not use statistical methods for this information collection.