

Programs Docket Room, 3F-056, Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20585, (202) 586-9478. The docket room is open between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

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Energy Information Administration

Proposed Revision and Extension of Forms

AGENCY: Energy Information Administration, Energy.

ACTION: Notice of the Proposed Revision and Extension of the Forms EIA-457A-G, "Residential Energy Consumption Survey," and Solicitation of Comments.

SUMMARY: The Energy Information Administration (EIA) is soliciting comments concerning the proposed revision and extension to the Forms EIA-457A-G, "Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECS)."

DATES: Written comments must be submitted within 60 days of the publication of this notice. If you anticipate that you will be submitting comments, but find it difficult to do so within the period of time allowed by this notice, you should advise the contact listed below of your intention to do so as soon as possible.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Wendel Thompson, EI-631, Forrestal Building, U.S. Department of Energy, Washington, DC 20585, (202-586-1119 or FAX 202-586-0018 or e-mail to: wthomps@eia.doe.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Requests for additional information or copies of the form and instructions should be directed to Wendel Thompson at the address listed above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

- I. Background
- II. Current Actions
- III. Request for Comments

I. Background

In order to fulfill its responsibilities under the Federal Energy Administration Act of 1974 (Pub. L. No. 93-275) and the Department of Energy Organization Act (Pub. L. No. 95-91), the Energy Information Administration is obliged to carry out a central, comprehensive, and unified energy data

and information program. As part of this program EIA collects, evaluates, assembles, analyzes, and disseminates data and information related to energy resource reserves, production, demand, and technology, and related economic and statistical information relevant to the adequacy of energy resources to meet demands in the near and longer term future for the Nation's economic and social needs.

The Energy Information Administration, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden (required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Pub. L. No. 104-13)), conducts a presurvey consultation program to provide the general public and other Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing reporting forms. This program helps to ensure that requested data can be provided in the desired format, reporting burden is minimized, reporting forms are clearly understood, and the impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed.

To meet this responsibility, as well as internal DOE requirements that are dependent on accurate data, the EIA has developed an ongoing program of national sample surveys on energy consumption in the manufacturing, commercial, residential, and residential transportation sectors.

The RECS has been designed by EIA to collect data on energy consumption in the residential sector. Information about the housing unit is collected through voluntary interviews with a representative national sample of approximately 6,500 households. Households are asked about what energy is used for in the home and characteristics of energy-using equipment. Data are also collected on household demographics (e.g., income, size, origin) and the housing unit's physical characteristics. Data on actual energy consumption and expenditures are obtained through a mandatory mailed survey that requests the billing records from the household's energy suppliers. The RECS has been conducted annually from 1980 through 1982 and triennially beginning in 1984. The data are disseminated in two publications, one entitled Housing Characteristics and the other Household Energy Consumption and Expenditures.

II. Current Actions

For the 1996 RECS, the EIA proposes several changes to the existing collection. The extension from the currently approved OMB expiration

date (May 31, 1996) has been proposed for three years (through May 31, 1999).

The household questionnaire (Form EIA-457A) for the 1996 RECS will be considerably shorter than it was for 1993. Almost all areas in which information has been collected will be reduced. The most significant is dropping the measurement of floorspace. Questions on consumer decision making, new technologies, demand-side management programs, and detail on new homes will be dropped. Less information will be collected on the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, characteristics of household members, wood burning, insulation, and lights. Form EIA-457H, the Lighting Supplement, will be eliminated and fewer questions will be asked about light usage, reducing the likelihood that EIA can produce an annual estimate for consumption of electricity for lighting. Energy suppliers will not be asked to provide information about their customer's participation in demand-side management programs or other energy conservation programs.

Form EIA-457A, the in-person household interview, will be conducted partially using Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). This technology involves replacing the paper and pencil procedure with a laptop computer. Using CAPI frees the interviewer from determining difficult branching operations in the questionnaire, notes inconsistent answers which can be resolved in the presence of the respondent, and speeds data delivery.

The sample design for 1996 will not oversample low income homes nor newly constructed homes. The sample of 6,500 households will be comprised of 2,000 in-person interviews and 4,500 telephone interviews. Less information will be collected by telephone. The in-person interviews and telephone interviews will be combined into one data set on the basis that each represents a national sample of households. Adjustments will be necessary to the telephone survey to correct for biases that result from excluding households without telephones from the sample.

The telephone method may not be used if an acceptable response rate cannot be achieved in a pretest currently underway. The response rate consists of successfully completing the telephone contact and receiving a signed authorization form from the household giving EIA permission to request the household's billing data from the energy supplier. If the telephone mode is not used, the sample of in-person interviews will be