

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

30 C.F.R §§ 75.1321, 75.1327, and 77.1909-1 - Applications for a permit to fire more than 20 boreholes and for the use of non-permissible Blasting Units or for the posting of notices of misfired holes (pertaining to underground coal mines) and the use of nonpermissible explosives and shotfiring units in shaft and slope construction. (pertains to coal mining industry).

**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.

Under Section 313 of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 (Mine Act), 30 U.S.C. § 873, a mine operator is required to use permissible explosives in underground coal mines. The Mine Act also provides that under safeguards prescribed by the Secretary of Labor, a mine operator may permit the firing of more than 20 shots and the use of nonpermissible explosives in sinking shafts and slopes from the surface in rock. Title 30 C.F.R. § 75.1321 outlines the procedures by which a permit may be issued for the firing of more than 20 boreholes and/or the use of nonpermissible shot-firing units in underground coal mines. In those instances in which there is a misfire of explosives, 30 C.F.R. § 75.1327 requires that a qualified person post each accessible entrance to the affected area with a warning to prohibit entry. Title 30 C.F.R. § 77.1909-1 outlines the procedures by which a coal mine operator may apply for a permit to use nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units in the blasting of rock while sinking shafts or slopes for underground coal mines.

To obtain a permit, the mine operator files an application with the MSHA district manager in the district in which the mine is located. Applications may be mailed or faxed, using company letterhead stationery and should contain the name and address of the mine, the designated active workings in which the units will be used and the approximate number of shots to be fired, the period of time during which such units are to be used, the nature of the development or construction for which they will be used, a plan to protect miners, a statement of the specific hazards anticipated, and the method to be employed to avoid the dangers anticipated.

The district manager may permit the firing of more than 20 boreholes of permissible explosives in a round where he has determined that it is necessary to reduce the overall hazard to which miners are exposed during underground blasting. The district manager issues a permit to use nonpermissible items when he finds that a permissible shot-firing unit does not have adequate blasting capacity and the use of such permissible units will create development or construction hazards. As a condition of use, the district manager may include safeguards, in addition to those proposed by the operator, that he determines are necessary to protect the safety of the miners at the time the blasting is permitted.

**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.**

MSHA uses the information requested to issue a permit to the mine operator for the use of nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units. The permit informs mine management and the miners of the steps to be employed to protect the safety of any person exposed to such blasting while using nonpermissible items.

**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.**

No improved information technology has been identified that would reduce the burden. The applications to use nonpermissible blasting units, to fire more than 20 bore holes or to use nonpermissible explosives and/or non-permissible blasting units in shaft or slope construction are narrative descriptions of the equipment and explosives to be used, the number and pattern of the bore holes to be fired and the safety precautions to be employed and may include schematics, tables and drawings. Such narrative plans and simple graphics can be prepared using personal computers and word processing programs and submitted via E-mail, where the mine operator has the capability of affixing transmittable authorization signatures or where the E-mail or facsimile is followed by a signed hard copy. However, neither the use of nor absence of access to electronic media significantly effect the burden imposed by the standard.

**1219-0025**

**February 20, 2004**

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 Item 2 above.

There is no similar or duplicate information that could be used. Permits are issued on a mine-by-mine basis for a period of time specified by the district manager. As far as could be determined, no state agency or other party requires such permit approval.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (Item 5 of OMB Form 83-I), describe any methods used to minimize burden.

This information does not have a significant impact on small businesses or other small entities. However, MSHA has made available on our web-site various sources of information, such as "Technical Assistance," "Best Practices," and an "Accident Prevention" site. These provide tips and general information on a number of various topics.

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.

In the absence of this collection, or permits for blasting units, explosives and shot-firing units, the mine operator or shaft and slope contractors would be putting the miners at risk. There would be no guarantee that the mine operator would have a plan designed to ensure the protection of life and the prevention of injuries to the miners exposed to underground blasting. In addition to the lack of accountability on the part of the mine operator for the miners health and safety, MSHA would not be able to effectively enforce the requirements of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;
- requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;
- requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;
- requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three

1219-0025

February 20, 2004

years;

- in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;
- requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or
- requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secret, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

Permit applications, which contain all pertinent information, are submitted only one time at any given mine. There are no requirements for the respondent to report the ongoing or occasional use of the District Manager approved blasting plan, including the use of nonpermissible blasting units or the firing of more than 20 boreholes. Although a mine operator is not explicitly required to submit information more than once, revised applications would need to be submitted to MSHA any time the conditions outlined in item 6 of this statement occur. This collection of information is otherwise consistent with the guidelines in 5 C.F.R. § 1320.5.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the data and page number of publication 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.

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency 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.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years -- even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

MSHA will publish the proposed information collection

**1219-0025**

**February 20, 2004**

requirements in the Federal Register, notifying the public that these information collection requirements are being reviewed in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, and giving interested persons 60 days to submit comments.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

MSHA has decided not to provide payments or gifts to respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

No MSHA form exists for the submission of applications for permits or the posting of a misfire notice as addressed by the standards (30 C.F.R §§ 75.1321, 75.1327, and 77.1909-1). There is no assurance of confidentiality provided to the respondents.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and 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.

There are no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:

- Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.
- If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in Item 13 of OMB Form 83-I.
- Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead, this cost should be included in Item 14.

1219-0025

February 20, 2004

Based on FY 2003 records, MSHA estimates that approximately 48 permit applications (19 under § 75.1321 and 29 under § 77.1909-1) will be received each year. MSHA safety specialists estimate that it would take a mine operator approximately one hour to prepare and submit a permit application:

$$48 \text{ applications} \times 1 \text{ hour/application} = 48 \text{ hours}$$

MSHA experience indicates that the permit applications are prepared by engineers and other technically trained persons. As such, MSHA estimates the cost per hour for preparation to be \$58.96 (Salaries based on data from the U.S. Coal Mine Salaries, Wages, & Benefits - 2002 Hourly Wage Rates for Coal Mines):

$$48 \text{ hours} \times \$58.96/\text{hour} = \$2830$$

On occasion, the use of explosives may result in the misfire of some of those explosives. In such cases, a qualified person is required to post a conspicuous warning notice at the entrance to the affected area. The number of active mining units using explosives to break coal has declined from 80 in April 1999 to 43 in January 2004. MSHA correspondingly estimates that the number of misfired bore holes requiring notices has proportionally decreased. MSHA estimates that not more than 57 misfires occur each year and that it takes approximately 20 minutes (0.33 hours) to post a notice warning that an undisposed of misfire is present. The 2002 Hourly Wage Rate for a coal miner is estimated to be \$28.66 per hour.

$$57 \text{ notices} \times 0.33 \text{ hours /notice} = 19 \text{ hours}$$

$$19 \text{ hours} \times \$28.66/\text{hour} = \$545$$

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14).

- The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life); and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information. Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of capital equipment, the discount rate(s), and the time period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs include, among other items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling and testing equipment; and record

1219-0025

February 20, 2004

storage facilities.

- If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of purchasing or contracting out information collection services should be a part of this cost burden estimate. In developing cost burden estimates, agencies may consult with a sample of respondents (fewer than 10), utilize the 60-day pre-OMB submission public comment process and use existing economic or regulatory impact analysis associated with the rulemaking containing the information collection, as appropriate.
- Generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof, made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.

MSHA estimates that the narrative and any tables, charts or drawing created for use in the permit application can be produced on normal office equipment used in the customary and usual course of business. MSHA further estimates that it will cost approximately \$5.02 to mail each application (FY 1997 cost inflated by Producer Price Index to FY 2003 by 0.91%):

48 applications x \$5.02/application = \$241

MSHA also estimates that the notices warning of a misfire will be non-reusable, pre-printed "danger / misfire" placards costing approximately \$6.08 each (FY 1997 cost inflated by Producer Price Index to FY 2003 by 0.91%):

57 postings x \$6.08 = \$347

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. Agencies also may aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.

MSHA estimates that the review and preparation of a written response approving or disapproving a permit application requires approximately four hours. Applications are reviewed by MSHA technical specialists earning approximately \$28.39 per hour (U.S. Office of Personnel Management General Schedule FY 2004 wage rate for Coal Mine Inspector GS-12/5).

48 applications x 4 hours = 192 hours

192 hours x \$28.39/hour = \$5,451

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reporting in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-I.

The decrease of 23 burden hours (from 90 to 67), and 56 responses (161 to 105) is due to a decline in the number of surface and underground coal mines routinely using explosives for coal breakage and construction activities. The reduction in applications for permits (from 55 to 48); and a reduction in the number of misfire notices (from 106 to 57) is the result of fewer underground mines using explosives in the mining of coal and fewer shafts and slope under construction during the last three year.

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.

MSHA does not intend to publish the results of this information collection.

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

MSHA is not seeking approval either display or not display the expiration date for OMB approval of this information collection. There are no forms associated with this information collection on which to display an expiration date.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission," of OMB 83-I.

MSHA is not requesting an exception to the certification statement.

## **B. Collection of Information Employment Statistical Methods**

The agency should be prepared to justify its decision not to use statistical methods in any case where such methods might reduce burden or improve accuracy of results. When Item 17 on the Form OMB 83-I is checked "Yes", the following documentation should be included in the Supporting Statement to the extent that it applies to the methods proposed:

1. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection methods to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., establishments, State and local government units, households, or persons) in the universe covered by the collection and in the

**1219-0025**

**February 20, 2004**

corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form for the universe as a whole and for each of the strata in the proposed sample. Indicate expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection had been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.

2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information including:

- Statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection,
- Estimation procedure,
- Degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification,
- Unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures, and
- Any use of periodic (less frequently than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.

3. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of non-response. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections of information to minimize burden and improve utility. Tests must be approved if they call for answers to identical questions from 10 or more respondents. A proposed test or set of tests may be submitted for approval separately or in combination with the main collection of information.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

There are no statistical methods required for this collection.

Type of Review: Extension

Agency: Mine Safety and Health Administration

Title: Application for a Permit to Fire More than 20 Boreholes for the use of Nonpermissible Blasting Units, Explosives, and Shot-firing Units (30 CFR 75.1321; 75.1327; and 77.1909-1)

OMB Number: 1219-0025

Frequency: On Occasion

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit.

Number of Respondents: 105

Estimated Time Per Respondent: 0.639 hours

Total Burden Hours: 67 hours

Total Annualized Capital/startup Costs: \$0

Total Annual (operating/maintaining systems or purchasing services): \$588

Description: Coal mine operators may apply for and be granted a permit for firing of more than 20 shots using nonpermissible explosives and nonpermissible shot-firing units in sinking shafts and slopes from the surface in rocks. Applications contain the safeguards that the mine operator is going to employ to protect the miners while using these blasting items.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Mine Safety and Health Administration

Proposed Information Collection Request

Submitted for Public Comment and Recommendations;

Applications for a permit to Fire more than 20 Boreholes, for the use of Nonpermissible Blasting Units, Explosives, and Shot-firing Units.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Labor, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden conducts a preclearance consultation program to provide the general public and Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing collections of information in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA95) [44 U.S.C. § 3506(c)(2)(A)]. This program helps to ensure that requested data can be provided in the desired format, reporting burden (time and financial resources) is minimized, collection instruments are clearly understood, and the impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed. Currently, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) is soliciting comments

concerning the proposed extension of the information collection related to the application for a permit to fire more than 20 boreholes, for the use of nonpermissible blasting units, and for the use of nonpermissible explosives and nonpermissible shot-firing units, and posting of warning notices with regard to mis-fired explosives.

**DATES:** Submit comments on or before [insert date 60 days after date of publication in the Federal Register].

**ADDRESSES:** Send comments to Darrin King, Chief, Records Management Division, 1100 Wilson Boulevard, Room 2139, Arlington, VA 22209-3939. Commenters are encouraged to send their comments on a computer disk, or via E-mail to [king.darrin@dol.gov](mailto:king.darrin@dol.gov), along with an original printed copy. Mr. King can be reached at (202) 693-9838 (voice) or 202-693-9801 (facsimile).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** A copy of the proposed information collection request and further information may be obtained by contacting, Darrin King, Chief, Records Management Division, U.S. Department of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration, Room 2139, 1100 Wilson Boulevard, Room 2139, Arlington, VA 22209-3939. Mr. King can be reached at [king.darrin@dol.gov](mailto:king.darrin@dol.gov) (Internet E-mail), (202) 693-9838 (voice), or (202) 693-9801(facsimile).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

## **I. Background**

Under Section 313 of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 (Mine Act), 30 U.S.C. § 873, a mine operator is required to use permissible explosives in underground coal mines. The Mine Act also provides that under safeguards prescribed by the Secretary of Labor, a mine operator may permit the firing of more than 20 shots and the use of nonpermissible explosives in sinking shafts and slopes from the surface in rock. Title 30, C.F.R. § 75.1321 outlines the procedures by which a permit may be issued for the firing of more than 20 boreholes and/or the use of nonpermissible shot-firing units in underground coal mines. In those instances in which there is a misfire of explosives, 30 C.F.R. § 75.1327 requires that a qualified person post each accessible entrance to the affected area with a warning to prohibit entry. Title 30 C.F.R. § 77.1909-1 outlines the procedures by which a coal mine operator may apply for a permit to use nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units in the blasting of rock while sinking shafts or slopes for underground coal mines.

## **II. Desired Focus of Comments**

MSHA is particularly interested in comments which:

- \* evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical

utility;

- \* evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

- \* enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

- \* minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submissions of responses.

### **III. Current Actions**

Title 30, C.F.R. §§ 75.1321, 75.1327 and 77.1901-1 provide MSHA District Managers with the authority to address unusual but reoccurring blasting practices needed for breaking rock types more resilient than coal and for misfires in blasting coal. MSHA uses the information requested to issue permits to mine operators or shaft and slope contractors for the use of nonpermissible explosives and/or shot-firing units under 30 C.F.R. Part 77, Subpart T - Slope and Shaft Sinking. Similar permits are issued by MSHA to underground coal mine operators for shooting more than 20 bore holes and/or for the use of nonpermissible shot firing units when requested under 30 C.F.R. Part 75, Subpart N - Explosives and Blasting. The approved permits allow the use of

specific equipment and explosives in limited applications and under exceptional circumstances where standard coal blasting techniques or equipment is inadequate to the task. These permits inform mine management and the miners of the steps to be employed to protect the safety of any person exposed to such blasting while using nonpermissible items. Also, the posting of danger/warning signs at entrances to locations where an misfired blast hole or round remains indisposed is a safety precaution predating the Coal Mine Safety and Health Act.

Type of Review: Extension (without change).

Agency: Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Title: 30 C.F.R §§ 75.1321, 75.1327, and 77.1909-1 - Applications for a permit to fire more than 20 boreholes, for the use of nonpermissible blasting units, and for the use of nonpermissible explosives and nonpermissible shot-firing units, and posting of warning notices with regard to misfired explosives (pertains to coal mining industry).

OMB Number: 1219-0025.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit institutions.

Cite/Reference	Total Respondents	Frequency	Total Responses	Average Time per Response	Burden
75.1321 Permit Appl.	19	On Occasion	19	1 hour	19 hours
75.1327 Misfire Notices Posted	57	On Occasion	57	20 minutes	19 hours
77.1909-1 Permit APL.	29	On Occasion	29	1 hour	29 hours

TOTALS	//////////	//////////	105	//////////	67 hours
--------	------------	------------	-----	------------	----------

Total Burden Cost (capital/startup): \$0.

Total Burden Cost (operating/maintaining): \$588.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval of the information collection request; they will also become a matter of public record.

Dated at Arlington, Virginia, this \_\_\_\_\_ day  
of \_\_\_\_\_, 2004.

David L. Meyer, Director,  
Office of Administration and Management.