

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT  
EMERGENCY BEACON REGISTRATIONS  
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0295**

**A. JUSTIFICATION**

**1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.**

This request is for extension of a currently approved information collection.

The United States, Canada, France and Russia operate the Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (COSPAS\*/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 NOAA prior to installation. These requirements are contained in Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations at [47 CFR 80.1061](#), [47 CFR 87.199](#) and [47 CFR 95.1402](#).

The registration data is used to facilitate a rescue and to suppress the costly consequences of false alarms, 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 the data provided to the rescue forces from the beacon registration database maintained by the 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. The EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) form is used for nautical beacons. The ELT (Emergency Locator Transmitter) form is used for aircraft beacons. The PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) is used to register portable beacons carried by individuals. 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.

**2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used.**

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,

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\*Cosmicheskaya Sistyema Poiska Aariynyich Sudov, which loosely translates into: “The Space System for the Search of Vessels in Distress”.

or until the beacon is reported to have been removed from service and deactivated. Currently, approximately 407,000 registrations are active, including approximately 34,000 new registrations in the past year, and the same number of new registrations is expected in each of the next three years.

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, some rather 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.

NOAA will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards 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 applicable 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 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](#).

**3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.**

Respondents may either: 1) obtain the forms electronically via the Internet at <https://beaconregistration.noaa.gov>, download, complete, sign and mail or fax or 2)

register directly on the website, in which case the signature requirement is waived.

**4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.**

The beacons, for which the FCC has mandated registration with NOAA, are essentially specialized radio transmitters. The information, as collected from the operators of these transmitters, does not exist in its entirety anywhere else but 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 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 a small businesses, organizations, or government bodies. The burden is already minimal, at 15 minutes per registration.

**6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.**

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.

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

This collection is consistent with OMB guidelines.

**8. Provide information on the PRA Federal Register Notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the 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.**

A Federal Register Notice, published on April 11, 2014 (79 FR 21733), solicited public comment on this renewal. No comments were received.

Meetings are held on an annual basis, or more frequently if needed, with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and the U.S. Air Force (USAF) and the beacon manufacturers, in order to ensure all parties' awareness of, or agreement to, program or product changes.

The following additional comments were received in response to a recent request from our office, from 1) the US Coast Guard Office of Search and Rescue, 2) ACR Electronics Inc., 3) US Air Force Isolated Personnel Branch and 4) US Air Force Rescue Coordination Center:

1) The United States Coast Guard concurs with NOAA's request for an extension of the currently approved information collection on digital distress beacons operating in the frequency range of 406.000 to 406.100 MHz.

The information requested is considered necessary for responding to distress alerts and performing the search and rescue mission. The Coast Guard has no other concerns or comments on this matter.

2) As a Beacon Manufacturer and a beacon owner, the personal information needs to be collected to support potential SAR cases to help reduce the time taken to find someone in distress and thus save more lives, reduce injuries and reduce the SAR burden on tax payers.

A 15 minute time burden should be the maximum and we feel many people should be able to complete the form in half this time.

We support the amount of information being collected as a means to help find people in distress and resolve false alarms quickly.

Some suggestions to think about for the future:

Would the Rescue Coordination Centers find it beneficial for a space for e-mail on the emergency contacts? There are four phone numbers now, perhaps Fax could go away and be replaced by e-mail.

Perhaps the back of the form could include some instructions on how to fill out the form. Some sections are obvious but others are not; some guidance on the form itself would help and would reduce the time burden. For example, on the PLB form under 'General Use Data' it might not be obvious that for 'Usage' you should probably only tick one box but for 'Specific Usage' or 'Type' you could tick multiple boxes.

Response: The SARSAT office will have an internal review about changing the content of beacon registration forms and will also reach out to all stakeholder groups for comment (USAF, USCG and beacon manufacturers). The review process will take approximately 9 months.

3) No comments. As a beacon owner and program member I have no issues with forms, data collected or time required.

4) Concur that collecting information is necessary for agency proper performance and practical utility. Concur with time estimate. No other comments.

**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 or confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.**

No assurance of confidentiality is provided to 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.**

No sensitive questions are asked.

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

The number of annually anticipated new respondents is 34,000, based on 2013 responses. Currently there are 400,771 registrations (including 34,000 new ones in the past year). With renewal required every two years, we expect half (200,386) of the currently registered entities to renew each year for the next three years. Thus, each year we estimate 234,386 (200,386 renewing + 34,000 new) registrations.

The average response time per registration is 15 minutes or less. **The total annual response time estimated is 58,597 hours** (234,386 x 15 minutes/60 minutes). The estimate is based on the time it would take to enter readily available information such as name, address, telephone number, radio call sign, type of vessel/aircraft, etc.

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

The annualized cost to respondents is \$28,712 for postage. Seventy-five per cent of respondents are estimated to submit registration forms electronically. The remaining twenty-five per cent (58,967) mail or fax the forms, with the average estimated cost of \$0.49. The overall average cost per response, including on line submissions, would be \$0.12.

**14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.**

The annualized cost to the Federal government is \$682,071:

Data entry and mail handling: \$588,591

Mailing envelopes: \$8,000

Postage: \$74,480

Hardware and expendables: \$11,000.

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

Program Changes: N/A.

Adjustments:

Total responses have increased by 48,080, and burden hours by 12,021. This is due to a steady annual increase in the number of registrations in our database. As our database grows, we anticipate similar increases in overall time burden; however, individual response times should remain the same at 15 minutes.

Total recordkeeping/reporting cost has decreased even as postage has increased by 5 cents in the past 3 years. A 12% increase in the past 3 years of respondents filing registrations online has decreased total average cost per respondent overall from \$0.18 cents to \$0.12 cents.

**16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.**

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.

**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.**

N/A.

**18. Explain each exception to the certification statement.**

N/A.

**B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS**

This collection does not employ statistical methods.