

EIA-877: Winter Heating Fuels Telephone Survey

Cognitive Interviews Protocol

March 2016

(This protocol is a guide – the questions presented here won't necessarily be asked exactly as worded in the protocol or in this order. It is important to note that not all questions will be asked in every interview.)

Research Goals:

- To understand the terminology used within the Winter Fuels industry
- To determine if discounts are used within the Winter Fuels industry and if those discounts are reflected in the price reported to EIA
- To determine if respondents can break out sales information at the residential level and state level
- To determine the impact on respondent burden by adding Heating Oil volumes sold to the survey

Part A – Introduction

- Introduce observers and their background

Purpose of Phone Call:

Let me start by telling you a little about what we will be doing today:

- We are asking you some questions about your reporting habits on the EIA-877.
- We are attempting to clear up some data issues we are having on the EIA-877 and gather information on potentially adding Heating Oil volumes to the survey.
- You were selected because you currently complete the EIA-877 survey
- There are no right or wrong answers, and if something doesn't make sense to you or you have any questions, please ask. It is important for us to know both things that work and don't work so we can improve the form.
- Before we get started, I'd like to audio record this interview so I don't have to later rely on my memory. This session is confidential, which means only persons directly related to this project can listen to your tapes, and the recordings are erased once our report is written. The report combines information from all of our interviews and contains no information that personally identifies you or the company at which you work. Is it okay if I record this interview?
- Do you have any questions?

Part 1- Terminology Used

- When you report your weekly fuel prices on the EIA-877, does your reported price include any discounts?
 - o (If needed) what discounts are applied before reporting your fuel price to EIA?

- o (If needed) when reporting fuel prices, are you referencing cash price or full credit price?
- What term would you use to describe a heating oil or propane sale without any discounts?
 - o (If needed) How would you define the term Market Price?
 - o (If needed) How would you define the term Sticker Price?
 - o (If needed) How would you define the term Credit Price?
 - o (If needed) How would you define the term Full-Credit Price?
 - o (If needed) How would you define the term Keep-Full Price?
 - o (If needed) How would you define Charge Price?
- Do you provide any discounts to customers that purchase heating oil or propane from you?
 - o (If needed) what types of discounts to you provide? (Cash discount, first fill discount, customer owned tank discount)?
 - o (If needed) Do you provide discounts to customers that purchase a certain volume of fuel from you?
 - (If needed) how many gallons of fuel would a customer have to purchase from you to receive a discount?
 - (If needed) does the discount change based on the number of gallons purchased by a customer?
 - (If needed) How many different discount tiers do you provide for customers for volume based discounts?
 - (If needed) How many different discount tiers do you provide for customers based on annual consumption rates?
 - (If needed) What are the purchase volumes required for each discount tier?
 - o (If needed) do you provide any other discounts for customers? (Cash discount, first fill discount, customer owned tank discount)

Part 2- Record Keeping

- Does your company keep records of sales for Heating Oil?
 - o What about for propane?
- What types of sales information do you keep within your records?
- Do your sales records include sales that occur within a specific state?
- How easy or difficult would it be for you to report annual volume sales for residential heating oil or propane on a once a year frequency?
- Are you able to report annual volume sales figures for a specific state??
- How much time do you estimate it would take you to gather the information to report annual volume sales?

- Is there a preferred time of the year (particular season, month, or time of the month) when it would be easier for you to report annual volume sales information?
- Do you keep records on residential and nonresidential sales?
- If EIA asked for residential and nonresidential sales, how easy or difficult would it be for to report that information?
- Does your company operate more than one fuel oil establishment within the state?
(If needed) how do you report sales figure if each establishment sells fuel oil at a different price?

Wrap Up

- Overall, what do you think of this survey?
- Is there any information not being asked on this form that you would find useful?
- Do you have any suggestions to improve this survey?

Thank you for your time today