

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
Emergency Beacon Registrations
OMB Control No. 0648-0295

Abstract

This is a request for a revision of a currently approved information collection. The forms are being updated in response to the development of 406MHz second generation beacons (SGBs), which are in development and are project to be available to the public in 2023. Additional information that will be collected on the forms includes: beacon serial number, an Automatic Identification System (AIS) Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number was added to the Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) form. The following fields were added to the Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) form to provide additional pertinent information to search and rescue (SAR) forces: Radio Call Sign (on EPIRB form), Vessel MMSI # (on EPIRB form), AIS MMSI # (just added to EPIRB form), and Aircraft Registration (Tail) No. (on Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) form).

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.**

The United States, Canada, France and Russia operate the Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (COSPAS¹/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 the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (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.

¹ *Cosmicheskaya Sistyema Poiska Aariynyich Sudov*, which loosely translates into: "The Space System for the Search of Vessels in Distress".

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.

These forms are being updated in response to the development of 406MHz second generation beacons (SGBs), which are in development and are projected to be available to the public in 2023. Changes to the forms are as follows:

23-Hex Beacon ID line: SGBs have 23-character hexadecimal unique identifiers. NOAA's 406 MHz Beacon Registration Database (RGDB) currently allows registrations for first generation beacons (FGBs) that contain 15-character hexadecimal identifiers. Once SGBs are on the market, beacon owners will have the capability to register either FGBs or SGBs in the RGDB. Even though each registration will be for only one beacon ID, the hardcopy registration form must contain separate lines for FGBs and SGBs due to the differing number of characters and their presentation on manufacture labels and packaging— FGB IDs are presented in groups of 5-5-5 and SGB IDs will be 6-6-6-5.

Old 23-Hex ID: This field was added to enable registration of a replacement SGB beacon. The RGDB will continue to capture data for both FGB and SGB replacements.

Beacon Serial No.: This field was added to capture the beacon's serial number, which appears on the manufacturer-supplied label and/or on the beacon or its packaging. The serial number provides additional verification of the beacon ID and can be used by RGDB staff to resolve cases of incorrect or duplicate beacon IDs.

Other: An Automatic Identification System (AIS) Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number was added to the EPIRB form. The following fields were added to the PLB form to provide additional pertinent information to search and rescue (SAR) forces: Radio Call Sign (on EPIRB form), Vessel MMSI # (on EPIRB form), AIS MMSI # (just added to EPIRB form), and Aircraft Registration (Tail) No. (on ELT form).

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.

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, or until the beacon is reported to have been removed from service and deactivated. Currently there are 742,055 registrations with 593,216 of those listed as "Active". (including 47,200 new ones in the past year). With renewal required every two years, we expect half (296,608) of the currently registered entities to renew each year for the next three years. Thus, each year we estimate 343,808 (296,608 renewing + 47,200 new) registrations.

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, 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 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.**

Respondents may either: 1) obtain the forms electronically via the Internet at <https://beaconregistration.noaa.gov>, download, complete, or sign and mail or 2) register directly on the website, in which case the signature requirement is waived.

- 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 Question 2.**

The beacons, for which the FCC has mandated registration with NOAA, are 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 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.**

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. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications 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.

A Federal Register Notice, published on December 17, 2021 (86 FR 71619), solicited public comment on this renewal. No comments were received.

NOAA reached out to 5 emergency radio beacon registrants 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. 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.

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 of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy. If the collection requires a systems of records notice (SORN) or privacy impact assessment (PIA), those should be cited and described here.

No assurance of confidentiality is provided to respondents.

This information is authorized for collection under system of records notice [COMMERCE/NOAA-20](#), Search and Rescue Satellite Aided Tracking (SARSAT) 406 MHz Emergency Beacon Registration Database. The information is stored in system NOAA5023, Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (SARSAT) and a current privacy impact assessment is available at https://www.osec.doc.gov/opog/privacy/NOAA%20PIAs/NOAA5023_PIA_SAOP_Approved.pdf.

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

No sensitive questions are asked.

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

In any given year, approximately 343,808 beacon registrations are received. These registrations may be for the EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon), the ELT (Emergency Locator Transmitter), the PLB (Personal Locator Beacon), or the Ship Security Alerting System (SSAS) beacon form.

All forms take approximately 15 minutes/response. Approximately 90% of all registrations and renewals are done online and take far less time: about 30 seconds for renewals and 5-10 minutes for new registrations, if they have the necessary information available. The 10% of new registrations or renewals that are completed offline and sent via physical mail take more time. To compensate for the different methods of response, 15 minutes was determined to be a good average. In a given year, approximately 296,608 renewals are received, along with 47,200 new registrations.

Information Collection	Type of Respondent (e.g., Occupational Title)	# of Respondents (a)	Annual # of Responses / Respondent (b)	Total # of Annual Responses (c) = (a) x (b)	Burden Hrs / Response (d)	Total Annual Burden Hrs (e) = (c) x (d)	Hourly Wage Rate (for Type of Respondent) (f)	Total Annual Wage Burden Costs (g) = (e) x (f)
Emergency Beacon Registrations	Public	343,808	1	343,808	0.25	85,952	\$ 27.07	\$ 2,326,720.64
Totals				343,808		85,952		\$ 2,326,720.64

Hourly wage was obtained from the BLS Occupational Employment Data using the mean hourly wage for All Occupations.

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

There are no costs to the public associated with this information collection. Eighty percent of registrations are completed online and the remaining twenty percent that are returned via mail are returned in a postage paid envelope.

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.

Cost Descriptions	Grade/Step	Loaded Salary /Cost	% of Effort	Fringe (if Applicable)	Total Cost to Government
Federal Supervisor	GS-14/5	106,427	1%		\$ 1,064
Other Federal Positions					
Contractor Cost					\$ 525,000
Travel					
Other Costs: Hardware & expendables					\$ 12,103

Other Costs: Postage, Envelopes					\$ 136,753
TOTAL					\$ 674,920

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in ROCIS.

The previous submission for this ICR in December 2020 had adjusted the registration response calculations to utilize active registrations instead of total registrations used in prior submissions. The expectation is now maintained that 50% of registrations are renewed each year and is based on the total amount of active registrations. Registrations are valid for two years, and our records indicate that approximately half of them continue to renew each year. Total responses, including renewals and new registrations, increase annually due to the expansion of the SARSAT system, resulting in the increased cost and burden.

Information Collection	Respondents		Responses		Burden Hours		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	Current Renewal / Revision	Previous Renewal / Revision	
Emergency Beacon Registration	343,808	208,762	343,808	208,762	85,952	52,191	Support and expansion of the SARSAT system has led to the continued annual increase of new and renewed registrations, resulting in an increased calculated burden since the previous submission.
Total for Collection	343,808	208,762	343,808	208,762	85,952	52,191	
Difference	135,046		135,046		33,761		

Information Collection	Labor Costs		Miscellaneous Costs		Reason for change or adjustment
	Current	Previous	Current	Previous	
Emergency Beacon Registration	\$ 2,326,720.64	\$ 1,342,339.66	\$ 0	\$ 0	The Federal Government pays for return postage to alleviate this cost to the public. The average of 15 minutes per response is the same as previous calculations and the total cost decreased due to the updated registration response determination
Total for Collection	\$ 2,326,720.64	\$ 1,342,339.66	\$ 0	\$ 0	
Difference	\$ 984,380.98		0		

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

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.

The agency plans to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection on all instruments.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.”

The agency certifies compliance with [5 CFR 1320.9](#) and the related provisions of [5 CFR 1320.8\(b\)\(3\)](#).