

number 1218-0003. The approval expires on July 31, 2001. Under 5 CFR 1320.5(b), an Agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless the collection displays a valid control number.

Signed at Washington, D.C. this 28th day of July 1998.

Charles N. Jeffress,

Assistant Secretary of Labor.

[FR Doc. 98-24190 Filed 9-8-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

[Docket No. ICR 98-30]

Confined and Enclosed Spaces and Other Dangerous Atmospheres in Shipyard Employment (29 CFR part 1915); Information Collection Requirements

ACTION: Notice; Opportunity for Public Comment.

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 (PRA-95) (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 impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed. Currently, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is soliciting comments concerning the proposed extension of the information collection requirements contained in the standard on Confined and Enclosed Spaces and Other Dangerous Atmospheres in Shipyard Employment (29 CFR part 1915). The Agency is particularly interested in comments that:

- 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.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before November 9, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments are to be submitted to the Docket Office, Docket No. ICR-98-30, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Room N-2625, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210. Telephone: (202) 219-7894. Written comments limited to 10 pages or less in length may also be transmitted by facsimile to (202) 219-5046.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Theda Kenney, Directorate of Safety Standards Programs, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Room N-3605, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210, telephone: (202) 219-8061. A copy of the referenced information collection request is available for inspection and copying in the Docket Office and will be mailed to persons who request copies by telephoning Theda Kenney at (202) 219-8061, extension 100, or Barbara Bielaski at (202) 219-8076, extension 142. For electronic copies of the Information Collection Request on Confined and Enclosed Spaces and Other Dangerous Atmospheres in Shipyard Employment, contact OSHA's WebPage on the Internet at <http://www.osha.gov> and click on "Regulations and Compliance."

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (the Act) authorizes the promulgation of such health and safety standards as are necessary or appropriate to provide safe or healthful employment and places of employment. The statute specifically authorizes information collection by employers as necessary or appropriate for the enforcement of the Act or for developing information regarding the causes and prevention of occupational injuries, illnesses, and accidents.

The requirements contained in the standard on Confined and Enclosed

Spaces and Other Dangerous Atmospheres in Shipyard Employment (29 CFR part 1915) are necessary for the protection of employees exposed to hazardous atmospheres in shipyard employment. Hazardous atmospheres, whether toxic, flammable or oxygen deficient/enriched, are found throughout shipyard employment, in shipbuilding, ship breaking, ship repair and land side activities. Before employees can work in spaces that may contain hazardous atmospheres, the spaces must be inspected and often tested to determine atmospheric contents. In some situations, the testing is done by a Marine Chemist, Coast Guard Authorized Person, or certified industrial hygienist and a hot work certificate is issued and posted. To make sure the atmosphere in a space remains safe for workers, retesting will be required. In the vast majority of situations, a Shipyard Competent Person (SCP) will test the space, record and maintain the results and post instructions for the workers to follow prior to or during work in the space. The SCP must also retest as necessary to maintain safe conditions.

Employees who must enter spaces that may contain hazardous atmospheres must be trained and a record kept of the training. Training is also required for the shipyards that maintain their own rescue teams.

Employers and employees are unable to recognize toxic, flammable or oxygen deficient/enriched atmospheres in spaces without first testing to determine that hazardous conditions exist. By requiring employers, under 29 CFR 1915.7, to ensure that employees have the ability and knowledge to recognize, test for, and remove these hazards and to specifically assign certain duties to these employees, OSHA is reducing the incidence of accidents caused by hazardous atmospheres within shipyard employment, including, but not limited to, vessels and vessel sections.

There is an increase of 135,869 burden hours associated with the information collection requirements contained in the standard (from 1,312 hours to 137,181 hours). This increase is due primarily to a mathematical error in OSHA's previous estimates. In the previous burden estimates, OSHA, in error, only counted the burden to perform tests and inspections once a year, rather than daily or 235 working days per year. In addition, OSHA's previous estimates did not account for all of the provisions in the standard currently considered "collections of information" under PRA-95.

II. Current Actions

This notice requests public comment on OSHA's burden hour estimates prior to OSHA seeking Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval of the information collection requirements contained in the standard on Confined and Enclosed Spaces and Other Dangerous Atmospheres in Shipyard Employment (29 CFR part 1915).

Type of Review: Extension of a Currently Approved Collection.

Agency: U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Title: Confined and Enclosed Spaces and Other Dangerous Atmospheres in Shipyard Employment (29 CFR part 1915).

OMB Number: 1218-0011.

Agency Number: Docket Number ICR-98-30.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit; Federal Government; State, Local or tribal Government.

Number of Respondents: 82,425.

Frequency: Varies (On Occasion, Daily).

Average Time per Response: Varies from 2 minutes (.03 hr.) 2 hours.

Estimated Total Burden Hours: 137,181.

Total Annualized Capital/Startup Costs: \$0.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval of the information collection request. The comments will become a matter of public record.

Signed at Washington, D.C., this 28th day of August 1998.

Charles N. Jeffress,

Assistant Secretary of Labor.

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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

[Docket No. H370A]

Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens: Request for Information

AGENCY: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Department of Labor.

ACTION: Request for information.

SUMMARY: OSHA requests information and comment on engineering and work practice controls used to eliminate or minimize the risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens due to

percutaneous injuries from contaminated needles and other contaminated sharps in occupational environments. Percutaneous injuries continue to be a concern in work settings where employees are exposed to bloodborne pathogens. The Agency is considering possible actions that it can undertake to assist in addressing this issue. Consequently, OSHA is interested in strategies for reducing percutaneous injury rates that have been successfully implemented in the work environment, including work practices and, in particular, the use of devices designed to limit the risk of such injuries. The information received in response to this notice will be carefully reviewed and will assist OSHA in determining effective approaches to reducing percutaneous injury rates and what role the Agency may have in these approaches.

DATES: Comments should be postmarked on or before December 8, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be submitted in quadruplicate or one original (hardcopy) and one diskette (5¼ or 3½ inch) in WordPerfect 5.0, 5.1, 6.0, 6.1, 7.0, 8.0, or ASCII to the Docket Officer, Docket No. H370A, Room N-2625, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20210. Telephone: (202) 219-7894. Comments of 10 pages or fewer may be transmitted by fax to (202) 219-5046, provided the original and three copies are sent to the Docket Office thereafter.

Comments may also be submitted electronically through OSHA's Internet site at URL, <http://www.osha-slc.gov/html/needle-form.html>. Please be aware that information such as studies, journal articles, and so forth cannot be attached to the electronic response and must be submitted in quadruplicate to the above address. Such attachments must clearly identify the respondent's electronic submission by name, date and subject, so that they can be attached to the correct response.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bonnie Friedman, Director, OSHA Office of Public Affairs, Room N-3647, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20210. Telephone: (202) 219-8148.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Needlesticks and other sharps injuries are a recognized means of transmitting infectious bloodborne diseases. Bloodborne pathogens shown to be transmitted through percutaneous injuries include hepatitis B virus (HBV), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV),

and hepatitis C virus (HCV). In recognition of the threat to the health of workers posed by HBV, HIV, and other bloodborne pathogens, OSHA promulgated the Bloodborne Pathogens standard (29 CFR 1910.1030) on December 6, 1991. The Agency is interested in the progress in efforts to prevent needlesticks and other percutaneous injuries in the years following promulgation of the Bloodborne Pathogens standard and in assessing the status of approaches to percutaneous injury prevention. Such approaches include use of safer medical devices and safer work practices as well as integrated percutaneous injury prevention programs. In using the term "safer medical device," the Agency is referring to the wide variety of implements designed to reduce the risk of needlesticks and other percutaneous injuries through such measures as substitution (as in the use of a blunt cannula with a prepierced septum for intravenous administration of medication), modification of the device to reduce the hazard (as with a blunt suture needle), or incorporation of safety features (as with a retractable-needle syringe). In addition, OSHA is interested in integrated percutaneous injury prevention programs that have been successfully implemented in the workplace. These programs may include use of safer medical devices, safer work practices, elimination of needles and other sharps in certain instances and procedures, focused intervention in high injury areas, specialized training, and other elements.

Hepatitis B infection in health care workers has been estimated to have declined following promulgation of the Bloodborne Pathogens standard, from 5,000 new cases in 1991 to 800 new cases in 1995 (Exhibit 1-5). The HBV infection incidence rate for health care workers is now lower than the incidence rate for the general U.S. population (Exhibit 1-4). However, needlesticks and other percutaneous injuries continue to be of occupational health concern due to the frequency of their occurrence and the severity of the health effects that can be associated with them. In the occupational environment, percutaneous injuries have been estimated to occur approximately 600,000 times annually (Exhibit 1-2).

HBV has long been recognized as a pathogen capable of causing serious illness and death. Approximately 60-70% of acute HBV infections are asymptomatic; the remaining cases result in symptoms and signs which may include jaundice, fatigue, abdominal pain, loss of appetite,