

Comments of the United Mine Workers of America
On the Proposed Extension of Information Collection; Permissible Equipment Testing
January 16, 2017
[MSHA Docket Number 1219-0066]

MSHA indicates that this proposal is part of the Department of Labor's continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden in accordance with the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. This proposal provides the general public and Federal Agencies with an opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing collections of information to ensure that requested data can be provided in the desired format, reporting burden is minimized, collection instruments are clearly understood, and the impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed.

The recordkeeping rules being considered in this action are Title 30 Code of Federal Regulations parts 6 through 36. These rules and regulations contain procedures by which manufacturers may apply for and have equipment approved as "permissible" in use. The law requires the approval or certification of certain mining products for use in underground coal and gassy underground metal mines. Technical experts from MSHA's Approval and Certification Center (A&CC) evaluate and test equipment, instruments, and materials for compliance. Products evaluated and tested range from small electronic devices to large mining systems. Following successful product evaluation and testing, a license is issued authorizing a manufacturer to produce and distribute products for use in mines. The MSHA approval issued by the A&CC is internationally recognized.

The Agency is interested in comments that:

- Evaluate whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information has practical utility;
- Evaluate the accuracy of the MSHA's estimate of the burden of the collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;
- Suggest methods to 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 submission of responses.

UMWA COMMENT

This is vital information that is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including the protection of health and safety of miners. All of this information is an integral part of ensuring the safe protection of our miners and must be maintained. This information is not a burden on the industry and is a very vital part of the overall safety of the operation and their employees. Records of equipment testing and approvals are an essential part to ensuring that the proper equipment is being used in gassy underground environments. This can help protect against explosions that as history has shown can be devastating.

We recommend that all of this information continue to be reported and recorded as has been in the past. These requirements should not be considered a "paperwork burden", is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, and does have practical utility. Should the coal operator choose to submit information electronically, the UMWA would not have a problem with this as long as the information is retained, made available to all interested parties, and copies provided to the miners representative.