

Email Solicitation for a Business Establishment Survey - Results from the 2015 Annual Refiling

Survey November 2016

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Any opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not constitute policy of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Abstract

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) is a federal/state cooperative program that publishes a count of monthly employment and total quarterly wages of employers covering 98 percent of U.S. jobs. These data are published quarterly, and are available at the county, MSA, state and national levels by industry. The Annual Refiling Survey (ARS) is an establishment survey that asks businesses to update their industry classification and geographic information. ARS online data collection began with the 2012 survey, and online respondents provided their email addresses when they reported their data. The ARS is conducted over a three-year cycle and businesses surveyed in 2012 were again eligible for selection in 2015. To reduce survey costs associated with printing and mailing envelopes and forms, the ARS began soliciting respondents via email in 2015. This paper summarizes the procedures, response results, and potential cost savings associated with the 2015 ARS email solicitation pilot test.

Key Words: email solicitation; online data collection; business establishment survey

1. Background

The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) is a cooperative program between the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the State Employment Security Agencies (SESAs). The QCEW program produces a comprehensive tabulation of employment and wages for workers covered by state Unemployment Insurance (UI) laws and Federal workers covered by the Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) program. The QCEW, covering 98 percent of U.S. jobs, serves as a near census of monthly employment and quarterly wages by 6-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industry.

The UI administrative records compiled under the QCEW program serve as the sampling frame for BLS establishment surveys that produce labor market information on job creation, consumer prices and inflation measures, employer costs of employee compensation and benefits, occupational employment and wages, and occupational injuries and illnesses. Other federal agencies rely on BLS data, and in some cases specifically QCEW data. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis uses QCEW data as the base for developing the wage and salary component of personal income. The Federal Reserve Board of Governors uses BLS data on employment, among other measures, when reviewing and setting monetary policy. Thus, the wide-scale use of QCEW data, and its impact on federal

statistical programs and policies requires that any changes to the program be thoroughly researched and the potential positive or negative impacts well understood prior to implementation.

The information obtained from state UI administrative records through the QCEW program is subject to BLS verification. The Annual Refiling Survey (ARS), conducted over a three-year cycle, asks approximately one-third of eligible establishments to confirm or update their main business activity and their business mailing and physical location addresses. Historically, this information has been collected on paper and via Touchtone Response (TRS), a reporting option only available to establishments that have no changes to their information).

Beginning with the 2012 ARS, QCEW introduced an online data collection pilot through the BLS Internet Data Collection Facility (IDCF). Establishments in five volunteer states were asked to respond to the ARS online in their mailed survey materials and respondents reporting online provided their email addresses when completing the 2012 survey. Online reporting was subsequently made available to all states during the 2012 collection cycle and more than 55,000 online responses were received. Following the three-year cycle for the ARS, these 2012 online reporters were eligible to be sampled again in 2015. This paper summarizes the procedures, response results, and potential cost savings associated with the 2015 ARS email solicitation pilot test.

2. Purpose of Testing Email Solicitation

The importance of the QCEW data to the BLS, and its data users, requires the very careful examination and implementation of any changes made to the ARS data collection procedures. With annual samples nearing one million establishments, data collection costs for the ARS are a significant component of the QCEW annual budget. The printing of solicitation letters, survey forms, and mailing and business reply mail envelopes for three mailouts per survey year, along with the associated mailout and return mail postage, are obvious areas to look at for cost savings during lean budget times. Because online reporting allows for a shorter collection cycle than traditional mail reporting, online reporting leads to reduced first, second and third mailings, thereby saving money on printing and postage. The success of the initial online data collection pilot in 2012 led to an expansion of online collection in 2013, and even wider implementation in 2014. Changes to the survey materials mailed to respondents soliciting online participation were also tested and modified in 2013 and 2014, evolving into a one-page letter requesting online participation by 2016.

The budget climate of recent years and the expansion of online data collection provided an additional opportunity to further cut costs and move towards a paperless ARS by testing whether we could successfully solicit respondents via email for the 2015 survey. With email solicitation of responses, the ARS could even further reduce mailing and printing costs by contacting respondents in advance of printing and mailing solicitation letters, resulting in responses at virtually no cost. Collecting data without the expense of soliciting respondents through traditional means results in additional cost-savings, above and beyond the significant savings already achieved through online data collection.

3. BLS Confidentiality Restrictions and IT Security Guidelines

The Bureau of Labor Statistics takes its responsibility to protect the confidentiality of survey respondents and responses very seriously.¹ To uphold this standard, there are guidelines and restrictions placed on the use of email by BLS survey programs, due to the inherent potential for unauthorized disclosure associated with electronic communications. These guidelines and restrictions encompass the use of email for both data collection and contact with respondents. The proper use of email by BLS survey programs is explained and restricted by BLS Commissioner's Order 1-13. One such restriction requires that email addresses for survey respondents be on record with the BLS prior to use.² Practical application of this restriction means that the 2015 ARS was the very first opportunity QCEW had for testing email solicitation using the email addresses supplied by the 2012 ARS online respondents. A second BLS policy regarding Information Technology (IT) security requires that credentials for online reporting (account numbers and passwords) not be provided in the same email. While account numbers and passwords can be mailed together to respondents, practical application of this IT security policy requires that we send two emails for each solicitation attempt, one with the online account information, and one with the password required to access that online account.

4. 2015 ARS Email Solicitation Pilot Procedures

As noted previously, the ARS is conducted on a three-year cycle, and the 2012 establishments that responded online were eligible for selection in 2015. 21,097 establishments selected for the 2015 ARS and were eligible for the email solicitation pilot. When a 2012 online respondent completed multiple ARS submissions, the same email address was linked to the ARS accounts in 2015. Only one solicitation email pair was sent to each eligible email address so multiple credentials were listed in the emails to cover all of the sampled establishments linked to the email address, thus only 18,926 email solicitation pairs were sent, covering 21,097 sampled establishments.

Solicitation emails were initially blasted to the 2015 pilot sample in late September, 2014 by an automated email application. Each solicitation included a pair of emails, one with the Subject Line: *Industry Verification Form Notice*, and one with the Subject line: *Industry Verification Form Notice – PASSWORD*. Attachments 1 and 2 are examples of the two emails sent in the first email blast in 2015.

As expected, we received a number of undeliverable messages from the initial email solicitation. We continued to include these email addresses in our solicitations and follow-ups as there were two primary reasons identified by email systems when a message went undeliverable. The most frequent reasons were either *An error occurred while trying to*

¹ *The Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSEA) safeguards the confidentiality of individually identifiable information acquired under a pledge of confidentiality for exclusively statistical purposes by controlling access to, and uses made of, such information. CIPSEA includes fines and penalties for any knowing and willful disclosure of individually identifiable information by an officer, employee, or agent of the BLS.*

² BLS Commissioner's Order No. 1-13... For the purpose of data collection arrangements. A respondent's email address on record with the BLS must be verified prior to use. Verifying an email address on the Internet is not sufficient.

deliver the message, or Your message to <xxx@xxx.xxx> was automatically rejected: Quota exceeded (mailbox for user is full). These two types of undeliverable messages suggested that if the original were re-sent delivery might be successful. There were roughly 2,600 solicitations in the email sample that would eventually never be delivered and would require solicitation through traditional means.

Over the nine-month data collection period, sampled establishments could receive up to 5 emails requesting their participation in the 2015 ARS. A follow-up email to non-respondents asked them to report online and notified them that if they did not, they would receive a paper request via mail in the next few weeks. Attachment 3 is an example of the non-response email follow-up email sent in 2015. An alternate follow-up email was sent to partial respondents, those that had used their credentials to logon to our secure website, but had not completed their data submission. Attachment 4 is an example of the partial response email sent in 2015.

Email solicitation for the 2015 ARS began in late September 2014, five weeks prior to the first mailed solicitation materials. See Table 1 for the schedule of email solicitations.

Table 1. ARS schedule of email solicitations

| Date | Type | Establishments |
|-----------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| 9/23/2014 | 1 st Email Solicitation | 21,097 |
| 10/8/2014 | 2 nd Email Solicitation | 15,750 |
| 1/7/2015 | 1 st Partial Follow-up | 2,345 |
| 1/7/2015 | 1 st Email NR Follow-up | 6,129 |
| 3/26/2015 | 2 nd Partial Follow-up | 2,593 |
| 3/26/2015 | 2 nd Email NR Follow-up | 4,107 |
| 6/18/2015 | 3 rd Partial Follow-up | 1,993 |
| 6/18/2015 | 3 rd Email NR Follow-up | 3,270 |

NR= Non-Response; Partial = Incomplete data submission on website.

5. 2015 ARS Email Solicitation Pilot Results

Responses to the email solicitations began immediately after the emails were sent. After just 24 hours, almost 17 percent of the establishments that were sent emails had already accessed our secure website and submitted reports, and an additional 17 percent responded over the next three weeks. After adjusting for the number of undeliverable emails, nearly 40 percent of the eligible establishments responded online within three weeks. During the five week pre-mailing period, two email solicitations were sent, one on September 23rd and another on October 8th. Responses were extracted from the online database and transmitted to the state agencies weekly beginning on September 24th. See tables 2a - 2d for the email solicitation results.

Table 2a. ARSWeb responses for email solicitations

| Date of Transmission | Responses by Email Recipients | % of Establishments (21,097) | % of Deliverable Establishments (18,438) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 9/24/2014 | 3,504 | 16.6% | 19.0% |
| 10/2/2014 | 1,381 | 6.5% | 7.5% |
| 10/8/2014 | 1,500 | 7.1% | 8.1% |
| 10/16/2014 | 893 | 4.2% | 4.8% |
| 3 Week Total | 7,278 | 34.5% | 39.5% |
| 10/24/2014 | 245 | 1.2% | 1.3% |
| 10/30/2014 | 145 | 0.7% | 0.8% |
| Pre-Mail Total | 7,668 | 36.3% | 41.6% |

Deliverable establishments = Sampled establishments - undeliverables.

A follow-up email was sent to non-respondents in the solicitation pilot on January 7th. A portion of these non-respondents had logged onto our secure website, but had not completed their data submission, and a portion had never logged on at all.

Table 2b. ARSWeb responses for 1st non-response and partial-response follow-up

| Date of Transmission | Responses by Email Recipients | % of Establishments (21,097) | % of Follow-up Establishments (8,474) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1/9/2015 | 654 | 3.1% | 7.7% |
| 1/16/2015 | 499 | 2.4% | 5.9% |
| 1/23/2015 | 154 | 0.7% | 1.8% |
| 1/30/2015 | 98 | 0.5% | 1.2% |
| 2/6/2015 | 40 | 0.2% | 0.5% |
| Total | 1,445 | 6.8% | 17.1% |

Follow-up establishments = Sampled establishments – undeliverables – responses.

A second follow-up email was sent to partial and non-respondents on March 26, 2015.

Table 2c. ARSWeb responses for 2nd non-response and partial-response follow-up

| Date of Transmission | Responses by Email Recipients | % of Establishments (21,097) | % of Follow-up Establishments (6,700) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 3/27/2015 | 74 | 0.4% | 1.1% |
| 4/3/2015 | 226 | 1.1% | 3.4% |
| 4/10/2015 | 71 | 0.3% | 1.1% |
| 4/17/2015 | 45 | 0.2% | 0.7% |
| 4/24/2015 | 34 | 0.2% | 0.5% |
| Total | 450 | 2.3% | 6.7% |

Follow-up establishments = Sampled establishments – undeliverables – responses.

And a final follow-up email notice was sent to partial and non-respondents at the very end of the survey on June 18, 2015.

Table 2d. ARSWeb responses for final non-response and partial-response follow-up

| Date of Deliverable | *Responses by Email Recipients | % of Solicitations (21,097) | % of Follow-up Emails (5,263) |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 6/26/2015 | 106 | 0.5% | 2.0% |
| 7/6/2015 | 20 | 0.1% | 0.4% |
| Total | 126 | 0.6% | 2.4% |

Follow-up establishments = Sampled establishments – undeliverables – responses.

*Responses received after the last mail solicitation. No cost savings.

6. Questions Asked and Answered

The QCEW program set out to test the viability of soliciting ARS establishments electronically. Two specific questions needed to be answered before we even began planning for email solicitations. (1) Would BLS confidentiality and security policies allow for electronic solicitation of establishments for the ARS, and (2) could QCEW solicit responses online and still provide the data protections required by CIPSEA? The answers to these two questions would have an impact on nearly all of BLS’s surveys moving forward.

Would BLS confidentiality and security policies allow for electronic solicitation of establishments for the ARS? With careful consideration of the risks associated with email solicitation, and current IT policies related to communicating via email with respondents, BLS determined that the “use of email to communicate with respondents with the intent to achieve the appropriate balance between the benefits of reduced respondent burden and the risks of unauthorized disclosure”³ is acceptable. Specifically, email contact with a respondent may be used to encourage participation in a BLS survey.

Could QCEW solicit responses online and still provide the data protections required by CIPSEA? “Federal policy requires the BLS to place limitations on the use, contents, and nature of communications containing Respondent Identifiable Information (RII).” Even though ARS emails do not contain RII, “It is the policy of the BLS to treat all email with respondents as if it contains RII.”⁴ Therefore, IT security policies concerning the electronic transmission of survey credentials (account numbers and passwords) are followed as directed.

Beyond just having the ability to solicit respondents electronically, we also needed to determine the impact changing the mode of solicitation would have on the ARS. (3) Would sampled establishments accept an email solicitation as a legitimate survey request from the BLS? And finally, (4) how might email solicitation impact the QCEW data collection budget?

³ BLS Commissioner’s Order No. 1-13. April 25, 2013.

⁴ BLS Commissioner’s Order 1-13. April 25, 2013.

Would sampled establishments accept an email solicitation as a legitimate survey request from the BLS? Within 24 hours, nearly 17 percent of respondents that received an email solicitation had logged onto our secure website and reported their data. Within five weeks, almost 40 percent of email solicitations had reported their data online. At this same time, we were also receiving emails to our Help Desk asking about the survey's legitimacy and we adjusted our electronic materials (see Conclusion) to address this concern.

How much could email solicitation reduce the QCEW data collection budget? There are three key components to the cost of collecting data for the Annual Refiling Survey: (1) printing survey documents and envelopes, (2) mailing survey documents, and (3) the establishment's chosen method of response, i.e., mail, telephone, or online. Two of these components are directly impacted by email solicitation: printing and mailout postage. The establishment's method of response does not specifically factor into email solicitation savings, however it is one of the main factors in calculating the cost savings of online collection.

Printing and postage costs vary from year to year as negotiated printing rates and USPS postal rates change. Changes to the content of the mailout packages and sample sizes also impact printing and postage costs. Printing and mailing a solicitation letter/envelope cost roughly \$ 0.60 per mailed unit for the 2015 ARS, and with several mailings occurring during the collection cycle, on average each sample unit is mailed 2.2 times (total mailed pieces/total mailed sample). A key factor that impacts the cost savings of email solicitation is the respondent's reporting speed. How quickly does an establishment respond after receiving an email survey notice? Up to three mailouts are scheduled to occur throughout the course of the survey, so the initial email solicitation response is key to reducing printing and postage costs as much as possible. Early responders are not contacted via traditional mail at all and no paper survey documents are printed, while late responders may receive paper solicitation materials in addition to email follow-ups. Early responses reduce costs by reducing the total number of mailed survey packages. Each responding email solicitation received prior to the final mailout will reduce printing and postage costs, from \$0.60 up to \$1.80, and with annual sample sizes near one million, the cost savings of email solicitation could be substantial.

7. Conclusion

The success of the 2015 ARS email solicitation pilot provided the QCEW program with a solid framework for incorporating electronic solicitation into the full ARS. Forty percent of the pilot establishments responded to the ARS within three weeks of receiving an email solicitation and before any survey documents were printed or mailed. Early responses result in the greatest cost savings so we are particularly interested in maximizing this initial response.

Through our email helpdesk we noticed that respondents who were specifically concerned with the validity of the email survey request, did not recognize the email sender: helpdesk.ars@bls.gov. For future email solicitations, the survey requests will come from a more recognizable sender, one that a respondent will be more likely to recognize and accept as legitimate, such as: [Annual Refiling Survey@bls.gov](mailto:AnnualRefilingSurvey@bls.gov), or [Bureau of Labor Statistics-ARS@bls.gov](mailto:BureauofLaborStatistics-ARS@bls.gov).

The email solicitation pilot also offered us opportunities to examine and refine our procedures and materials as we expand our efforts.

Throughout the collection cycle, follow-up emails were periodically sent to non-respondents. After analyzing the survey results, we realized that the follow-up emails did not generate as significant a response as originally anticipated. In fact, the frequency of email reminders will be curtailed as we expand. We do not want to give the impression that we are “spamming” non-respondents with frequent email requests for survey participation.

Beginning in July 2015, an ARS Respondent’s webpage (<http://www.bls.gov/respondents/ars/>) was deployed on the main BLS public internet site providing respondents with background information on the Annual Refiling Survey. From this page, respondents can access step-by-step illustrated instructions for reporting online, review our FAQs, print blank survey forms for faxing, access their state contact information, and submit online help requests. Respondents are also provided with the link to this website in their solicitation emails.

Solicitation emails are sent in a blast from an automated email attendant and the sending email address is an unmonitored mailbox. If a respondent replies to the solicitation email with a question, they are automatically forwarded a copy of our *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*. This automated response can be tailored as necessary during the survey to address any new or recurring issues reported by respondents to our helpdesk. Attachment 5 is an example of our automated FAQs.

And finally, the 2015 ARS email solicitation pilot was conceived under the guidelines established by BLS Commissioner’s Order 1-13 concerning the use of company emails on-file with the BLS by its survey programs. BLS Commissioner’s Order 1-16 more accurately defined “on-file” with the BLS to mean either provided through the Internet Data Collection Facility (IDCF) or via our state partners.⁵ Beginning with the 2016 ARS, our state partners will be able to provide email addresses obtained by their UI Tax departments (where available) for ARS solicitation purposes. The BLS treats these email addresses with the same CIPSEA protections as all other BLS survey data. ARS solicitation emails will include both prior ARS online respondents, and new or formerly paper/telephone ARS respondents. This will allow for faster expansion of email solicitation and greater immediate cost savings as we move towards a paperless ARS in the future.

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⁵BLS Commissioner’s Order No. 1-16. February 17, 2016.

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<http://www.marketstrategies.com/rbdocs/SolicitationGuidelines.pdf>

Attachment 1. Solicitation Email

From: helpdesk.ars@bls.gov
Subject: Industry Verification Form Notice

Dear [Respondent Name],

Every three years, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics requests that you verify the address and main business activity for your firm. You filed this report online in the past. We are asking that you log on to our secure website and report online again to reduce costs and save tax dollars.

Please log on to our secure website to complete your report: <https://idcfars.bls.gov/>
WEB ID 1: 991234567890
PASSWORD: Your 8-character password has been sent in a separate email.

If you are having difficulty accessing the system, please email us at helpdesk.ars@bls.gov

This survey is authorized by 29 U.S. Code, Section 2. Your cooperation is needed to make the results of this survey complete, accurate, and timely. The Industry Verification Form, BLS-3023 is approved with O.M.B. No. 1220-0032, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor. The information collected will be used for statistical and Unemployment Insurance program purposes and other purposes in accordance with law. Additional information regarding this survey can be found at: www.bls.gov/cew/ivf/

Questions about this survey? Contact information for your State office is available here: <http://www.bls.gov/cew/ivf/cewars00.htm>

Thank you,
U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

(BLS) is committed to the responsible treatment of confidential information and takes rigorous security measures to protect confidential information in its possession. This email contains confidential information. If you believe you are not the intended recipient of this message, please notify the sender and delete this email without disclosing, copying, or further disseminating its contents.

The ARS is mandatory in 26 States and territories. Solicitation emails sent to respondents where the survey is mandatory included a mandatory statement in the second paragraph and referenced the applicable state law requiring a response.

Attachment 2. Password email

From: helpdesk.ars@bls.gov

Subject: Industry Verification Form Notice – PASSWORD

To complete your Industry Verification Form online, please use the Web ID from the email you recently received with the subject line: Industry Verification Form Notice, along with your password below to log on to our secure website: <https://idcfars.bls.gov/>

If you cannot locate the Industry Verification Form Notice email, please check your email SPAM folder.

PASSWORD1: Aa123456

Thank you,
U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

(BLS) is committed to the responsible treatment of confidential information and takes rigorous security measures to protect confidential information in its possession. This email contains confidential information. If you believe you are not the intended recipient of this message, please notify the sender and delete this email without disclosing, copying, or further disseminating its contents

Attachment 3. Non-response follow-up email

From: helpdesk.ars@bls.gov

Subject: Industry Verification Form Notice

Dear [Respondent Name],

Every three years, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics requests that you verify the address and main business activity for your firm. You filed this report online in the past. We are asking that you log on to our secure website and report online again to reduce costs and save tax dollars. If you do not report online, a paper form will be mailed to you.

Please log on to our secure website to complete your report: <https://idcfars.bls.gov/>

WEB ID 1: 991234567890

PASSWORD: Your 8-character password has been sent in a separate email.

If you are having difficulty accessing the system, please email us at helpdesk.ars@bls.gov

This survey is authorized by 29 U.S. Code, Section 2. Your cooperation is needed to make the results of this survey complete, accurate, and timely. The Industry Verification Form, BLS-3023 is approved with O.M.B. No. 1220-0032, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor. The information collected will be used for statistical and Unemployment Insurance program purposes and other purposes in accordance with law. Additional information regarding this survey can be found at: www.bls.gov/cew/ivf/

Questions about this survey? Contact information for your State office is available here: <http://www.bls.gov/cew/ivf/cewars00.htm>

Thank you,
U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

(BLS) is committed to the responsible treatment of confidential information and takes rigorous security measures to protect confidential information in its possession. This email contains confidential information. If you believe you are not the intended recipient of this message, please notify the sender and delete this email without disclosing, copying, or further disseminating its contents.

Attachment 4. Partial response follow-up email

From: helpdesk.ars@bls.gov
Subject: Industry Verification Form Notice

Dear [Respondent Name],

Every three years, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics requests that you verify the address and main business activity for your firm. Our records indicate that you logged into our system and began filing out this report, but you have not complete and submitted this report. We are asking that you log back on to our secure website and complete your online report.

Please log on to our secure website to complete your report: <https://idcfars.bls.gov/>

WEB ID 1: 991234567890

WEB ID 2: 999876543210

PASSWORD: Your 8-character password has been sent in a separate email.

If you are having difficulty accessing the system, please email us at helpdesk.ars@bls.gov. This survey is authorized by 29 U.S. Code, Section 2. Your cooperation is needed to make the results of this survey complete, accurate, and timely. The Industry Verification Form, BLS-3023 is approved with O.M.B. No. 1220-0032, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor. The information collected will be used for statistical and Unemployment Insurance program purposes and other purposes in accordance with law. Additional information regarding this survey can be found at: www.bls.gov/cew/ivf/

If you have already submitted this report directly to your State via fax, phone, or paper, please disregard this message and accept out thanks for reporting.

Questions about this survey? Contact information for your State office is available here: <http://www.bls.gov/cew/ivf/cewars00.htm>

Thank you,
U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

(BLS) is committed to the responsible treatment of confidential information and takes rigorous security measures to protect confidential information in its possession. This email contains confidential information. If you believe you are not the intended recipient of this message, please notify the sender and delete this email without disclosing, copying, or further disseminating its contents.

Attachment 5. Automated email reply of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Thank you for replying to the Annual Refiling Survey Notice. THIS INBOX IS NOT MONITORED. Please see answers to our most frequently asked questions. If you have a question that is not answered below, please email us at ars.helpdesk@bls.gov and we will respond to your inquiry.

1. Unable to log into the Website

The secure website link is <https://idcfars.bls.gov>. If you are having trouble logging into the website, we recommend that you close your internet browser to refresh the system, reopen, and attempt to log in again.

If you are copying and pasting the password, please ensure that you are only using the 8 character password and not copying spaces before or after.

2. Can't find your PASSWORD or WEB ID

To have your PASSWORD or WEB ID resent, please submit a request to our helpdesk:

<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/forms/ars/?respondents/ars/home.htm>

PASSWORD: Enter your email address, name, Subject: PASSWORD, check the radio button for Yes, and enter your 12-digit Web ID. Leave the question box blank.

WEB ID: Enter your email address, name, Subject: WEB ID. In the box where you can enter your question, please input the email address where you received the password message so that we can look up the account.

3. Is this request legitimate?

You can view the current OMB approval for the Industry Verification Form, BLS-3023 online:

<http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAOMBHistory?ombControlNumber=1220-0032>

In an effort to reduce costs, an email prompt was sent to you because you have reported for the ARS online in the past or your email address is associated with this business in your State Unemployment Insurance system. This survey is used by the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Department of Labor. You are asked to verify or update your location address and your economic activity for statistical purposes. This survey is authorized by law, 29 U.S.C. 2. Additional information on the QCEW program can be found online at: www.bls.gov/cew

Phone contact information for your State office is available here:

<http://www.bls.gov/respondents/ars/contacts.htm>

Please do not hesitate to contact us at ars.helpdesk@bls.gov if you have any further questions.

4. Technical Problem with the Website

If you are experiencing technical difficulties with the website, such as being redirected to the log in screens after pressing continue, please close your internet browser to refresh the system, reopen, and log in again. This should allow you to navigate freely through the site. Some users have encountered issues when using Internet Explorer 9. If the pages do not render correctly in your browser (cropped, shifted off-screen, etc.) or you are unable to submit, please use a different browser or download a newer version of IE.

5. 502s – Bad Gateway or Unexpected Situation Error

If you receive a 502 – Bad Gateway or an Unexpected Situation error message while logging into the system, we apologize for the inconvenience. Please close your browser completely to refresh the session and attempt to log in again.

6. Make a Correction

To make a correction to submitted data, you can contact your State directly. Please be ready to supply your Unemployment Insurance (UI) Account Number. Your State contact information can be found here: <http://www.bls.gov/respondents/ars/>

7. Report a closed location

To report that your location is closed, you can contact your State directly. Please be ready to supply your Unemployment Insurance (UI) Account Number along with your closing date. Your State contact information can be found here: <http://www.bls.gov/respondents/ars/>

8. No longer report for this client

If you are no longer the current contact for this business, please disregard this request. A letter will be mailed directly to the business in the coming weeks.