

smallest UI program workloads and 480 cases per year in the other states. State BAM staff audit each selected claim, examining all aspects of a claimant's eligibility to receive UI benefits during the sampled week. In an investigation, staff verify wages used to establish monetary entitlements, the claimant's reason for being unemployed, efforts to find work during the week, and any other factors which would have affected the claimant's entitlement to a UI benefit payment during the sampled week or the amount of the benefit paid. The findings are then numerically coded and entered into an automated database that is maintained on a computer located in each state.

Denied Claims Accuracy. On a weekly basis, states select systematic random samples from three separate sampling frames constructed from the universes of UI claims for which eligibility was denied for monetary, separation and nonseparation reasons. All states sample a minimum of 150 cases of each denial type in each calendar year. State BAM staff review agency records and contact claimants, employer(s), and all other relevant parties to verify information in agency records or obtain additional information pertinent to the determination that denies UI benefit eligibility. Unlike the investigation of paid claims, in which all prior determinations affecting claimant eligibility for the compensated week selected for the sample are evaluated, the investigation of denied claims is limited to the issue upon which the denial determination is based. The findings are then numerically coded and entered into an automated database that is maintained on a computer located in each state. Like the investigation of paid claims, states have the flexibility to conduct the investigation of denied claims by in-person interview, telephone, mail, e-mail or fax, as they deem appropriate.

The Department relies heavily on BAM data for information on states' UI operations (e.g., the percent of claims taken by telephone and other remote methods) and performance. These data are reported annually in a data summary report and as part of the UI PERFORMS Annual Report. Further, BAM data are used as part of a overpayment detection measure under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

II. Desired Focus of Comments

The Employment and Training Administration is soliciting comments concerning the proposed extension of the collection of the UI BAM program data (OMB control number 1205-0245) now authorized through March 31,

2004. The Department is particularly interested in comments which:

- 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.

A copy of the information collection handbook (ETA Handbook 395) can be obtained by contacting the employee listed above in the contact section of this notice.

III. Current Actions

Type of Review: Extension.

Agency: Employment and Training Administration.

Title: Unemployment Insurance Benefit Accuracy Measurement Program.

OMB Number: 1205-0245.

Recordkeeping: States are required to follow their state laws regarding public record retention in retaining BAM paid and denied claims records.

Affected Public: Individuals; businesses; other for-profit/not-for-profit institutions; farms; Federal, State, local or tribal governments.

Frequency: Annually.

Total Respondents and Responses: 188,984 per year (52 SWAs/3,634 per state; includes claimants, employers, third parties, and SWA BAM program staff).

Estimated Time Per Case: Paid claims: claimant—0.5 hours; employers—0.85 hours; work search contacts—0.55 hours; third parties—0.05 hours; and SWA BAM staff—8.27 hours. Denied claims: claimant—0.5 hours; employers and third parties—0.5 hours; and SWA BAM staff—6.66 hours (average).

Estimated Total Burden Hours: 423,243 annually (8,139 hours per state).

Total Burden Cost (capital/startup): \$0.

Total Burden Cost (operating/maintaining): \$12,544,372.73 annually (approximately \$241,237.94 per state).

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval of the information collection request; they will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: December 9, 2003.

Cheryl Atkinson,

Administrator, Office of Workforce Security.

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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employment and Training Administration

Labor Certification Process for Temporary Agricultural Employment of Nonimmigrant Workers in the United States (H-2A Workers); On-line Application Processing System; Formal Briefings

AGENCY: Employment and Training Administration, Labor.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: As the result of the General Accounting Office (GAO) recommendation to the Secretary of Labor on ways to improve the H-2A program, the Department of Labor (DOL) has designed an H-2A case management system to improve data tracking and reporting capabilities. The system will also provide a user-friendly platform for the Regional Office staff and the regulated community to enter application data. The Division of Foreign Labor Certification, Employment and Training Administration (ETA), Department of Labor, announces two formal briefings to demonstrate to agricultural employers and other interested parties the new On-Line Application Processing System. The briefings will allow ETA to demonstrate to the regulated community, i.e., employers, attorneys, agents and associations, the benefits of the on-line application completion module.

DATES: The briefing dates are:

Thursday, January 15, 2004, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Boxborough, MA
Thursday, January 22, 2004, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Nashville, TN.

Notices of intention to appear at the briefings must be postmarked no later than December 29, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The briefing locations are:
Holiday Inn Boxborough, 242 Adams Place, Boxborough, MA 01719
Double Tree Hotel, 315 Fourth Avenue, N., Nashville, TN 37219