

- 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.

### III. Current Action

This notice requests comments on the extension of the ICR included in PTE 82-63. The Department is not proposing or implementing changes to the existing ICR at this time.

*Type of Review:* Extension of a currently approved collection of information.

*Agency:* Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration, Department of Labor.

*Titles:* Prohibited Transaction Class Exemption 82-63.

*OMB Number:* 1210-0062.

*Affected Public:* Individuals or households; Business or other for-profit; Not-for-profit institutions.

*Respondents:* 42,000.

*Frequency of Response:* On occasion.

*Responses:* 42,000.

*Estimated Total Burden Hours:* 3,500.

*Total Burden Cost (Operating and Maintenance):* \$0.

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

Dated: February 15, 2001.

**Gerald B. Lindrew,**

*Deputy Director, Office of Policy and Research, Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration.*

[FR Doc. 01-4409 Filed 2-21-01; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

### Veterans' Employment and Training Service

#### Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request: Federal Contractor Veterans' Employment Report VETS- 100

**AGENCY:** Veterans' Employment and Training Service, Labor.

**ACTION:** Extend current collection for three years.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Labor, as part of its continuing effort to reduce

paperwork and respondent burden, conducts a pre-clearance 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 (PRA95) (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 the impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed.

**DATES:** Comments are to be submitted by April 23, 2001.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments are to be submitted to the Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor, Room S-1316, 200 Constitution Ave., NW., Washington, DC 20210, telephone (202) 693-4701. Written comments limited to 10 pages or fewer may also be transmitted by facsimile to (202) 693-4755. Receipt of submissions, whether by U.S. mail, e-mail or FAX transmittal, will not be acknowledged; however, the sender may request confirmation that a submission has been received, by telephoning VETS at (202) 693-4717 (VOICE) or (877) 670-7008 (TY/TDD).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:** Contact Ron Bachman, Office of Operations and Programs, Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor, Room S-1316, 200 Constitution Ave., NW., Washington, DC 20210, telephone: (202) 693-4707. Copies of the referenced information collection request are available for inspection and copying through VETS and will be mailed to persons who request copies by telephoning Ron Bachman at (202) 693-4707.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### I. Background

The Federal Contractor Veterans Employment Report VETS-100 is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, is used to facilitate Federal contractor and subcontractor reporting of their employment and new hiring activity. Title 38 U.S.C., section 4212 (d) was amended by the Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act on October 31, 1998, and now requires the collection of information from entities holding contracts of \$25,000 or more with Federal Departments or agencies to report annually on (a) the number of current employees in each job category and at each hiring location who are special disabled veterans, the number

who are veterans of the Vietnam era, and the number who are other eligible veterans who served on active duty during a war or a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized; (b) the total number of employees hiring during the report period and of those, the number of special disabled, the number who are veterans of the Vietnam era, and the number who are other veterans; and the maximum and minimum number of employees employed by the contractor at each hiring location.

##### II. Desired Focus of Comments

Currently the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is soliciting comments concerning the proposed information collection request for the Federal Contractor Veterans' Employment Report VETS-100. The Department of Labor 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.

##### III. Current Actions

This notice requests the Office of Management and Budget approval for the paperwork requirements for the Federal Contractor Veterans' Employment Report VETS-100.

*Type of Review:* Regular Submission.

*Agency:* Veterans' Employment and Training Service.

*Title:* Federal Contractor Veterans' Report VETS-100.

*OMB Number:* 1293-0005.

*Affected Public:* Business or other for-profit institutions and not-for-profit institutions.

*Total Respondents:* 194,580.

*Average Time per Response:* 30 minutes.

*Total Burden Hours:* 97,290.

*Total Annualized Capital/startup costs:* \$0.

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

Dated: February 13, 2001.

**Stanley Seidel,**

*First Assistant to the Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service.*

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## NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

[Notice 01-028]

### National Environmental Policy Act; Mars Exploration Rover-2003 Project

**AGENCY:** National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement and to conduct scoping for the Mars Exploration Rover-2003 (MER-2003) project.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), and NASA's policy and procedures (14 CFR part 1216 subpart 1216.3), NASA intends to conduct scoping and prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed Mars Exploration Rover-2003 (MER-2003) project. The purpose of this project would be to place two mobile science laboratories (rovers) on the surface of Mars to remotely conduct geological investigations, and to characterize a diversity of rocks and soils, which may hold clues to past water activity.

The MER-2003 project involves two launches in 2003 of identical MER-2003 spacecraft (the MER-A mission and MER-B mission) from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station (CCAFS), Florida. The MER-A launch aboard a Delta II launch system would occur during May or June 2003. The MER-B launch would occur during June or July 2003, also aboard a Delta II launch system. Potential environmental impacts to be considered are those potential impacts associated with normal launches from CCAFS, and radiological and non-radiological risks associated with launch accidents. Each rover and its associated lander in combination (lander-rover) may require the use of up to 11 Radioisotope Heater

Units (RHUs) for temperature control and small quantities of curium-244 and cobalt-57 for scientific instrumentation.

**DATES:** Interested parties are invited to submit comments on environmental concerns in writing on or before April 9, 2001, to assure full consideration during the scoping process.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments should be addressed to Mr. David Lavery, NASA Headquarters, Code SD, Washington, DC 20546-0001. While hardcopy comments are preferred, comments may be sent by electronic mail to: marsnepa@hq.nasa.gov.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

David Lavery, 202-358-4800 or by electronic mail at marsnepa@hq.nasa.gov.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NASA proposes to launch the MER-2003 spacecraft (MER-A and MER-B) in 2003 to gather scientific data on the geological characteristics of the Martian surface environment in pursuit of NASA's goal of understanding Mars in terms of whether or not life exists or has ever existed on the planet. The MER-2003 project would help NASA ensure continuity of its overall Mars exploration efforts.

The proposed first launch of the MER-A mission would take place during May or June 2003 from CCAFS. A Delta II launch system would be employed to launch the spacecraft on its trajectory to Mars, with an arrival in January 2004. The Delta II launch system would include nine graphite epoxy strap-on solid rocket motors, a liquid bi-propellant first stage, a liquid bi-propellant restartable second stage, and a solid propellant STAR-48B third stage. The MER-B mission would be launched from CCAFS during June or July 2003 using a Delta II launch system, with an arrival at Mars in February 2004.

Each MER-2003 spacecraft would consist of a cruise stage and an entry, descent, and landing (EDL) system which would include an aeroshell, backshell, parachute, and airbags. A lander containing a large rover would be enclosed within the EDL system. The primary function of the EDL system would be to convey its lander-rover safely to the surface of the planet. Each rover would weigh up to approximately 153 kilograms (about 337 pounds). Each rover would carry all science instruments and communications equipment for transmitting to and receiving data from Earth, either by using an existing Mars orbiting spacecraft or by communicating directly with Earth.

Each rover would be equipped with a number of scientific instruments, including: a stereo panoramic camera, a miniature thermal emission spectrometer, a magnetic target array, a Moëssbauer spectrometer, a microscopic surface imager, an alpha-particle X-ray spectrometer (APXS), and a rock abrasion tool. These instruments would be employed to characterize the chemical and geological nature of the landing site and surrounding area, and to provide images for transmission to Earth. Each rover would be designed to function a minimum of 90 sols (1 sol = 1 Martian day = 24 hours, 37 minutes or 1.026 Earth days). The Moëssbauer spectrometer and the APXS both would employ small amounts of radioactive materials as instrument sources. The Moëssbauer spectrometer would utilize up to  $1.30 \times 10^{10}$  becquerels (Bq) (350 millicuries (mCi)) of cobalt-57. The APXS would use up to  $1.85 \times 10^9$  Bq (50 mCi) of curium-244. Radioisotope Heater Units (RHUs) would be used on each rover to support survival of science instruments and electronics in the low temperatures on Mars. RHUs may also be required on each lander for thermal control during cruise. Each RHU contains approximately 2.7 grams (about 0.1 ounce) of plutonium dioxide to generate heat. A total of up to eleven RHUs may be required on-board each lander-rover. The inventory of plutonium dioxide on-board each lander-rover could total up to 29.7 grams (1.1 ounces) with a total activity of about  $13.5 \times 10^{12}$  Bq (approximately 365 curies (Ci)).

The proposed MER-2003 missions would employ a technique similar to that demonstrated by the 1996 Mars Pathfinder mission to ensure a safe landing on the surface of Mars. This technique would employ a heat shield, small solid retro-rockets, and a parachute to decelerate the lander as it passes through the Martian atmosphere. A system of airbags would then be used to cushion and protect the lander upon contact with the Martian surface. Once each lander comes to rest the airbags would deflate and the lander petals would unfold. Each rover would then drive off of its lander platform and begin exploring the landing site. NASA has not selected specific landing sites yet but is currently considering potential sites between 15 degrees South to 5 degrees North for the MER-A mission, and between 15 degrees South and 15 degrees North for the MER-B mission.

This EIS will address the purpose and need for the proposed MER-2003 project in detail and the environmental impacts associated with its implementation. The environmental