

Web Collection in the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program November, 2016

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Abstract

The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program serves as the establishment census and sample frame for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In this capacity, the QCEW program conducts the Annual Refiling Survey (ARS) to review and update the classification codes and geographic location codes assigned to the approximately 9 million establishments in the United States. Around 1/3 of these worksites are reviewed each year. QCEW developed a web-based data collection program to address the data collection needs of its ARS.

This paper focuses on two new innovations in data collection implemented to move the ARS to a fully web-based survey, moving away from collection on paper forms. The first is the use of a one-page letter directing respondents to web collection and the second is the use of emails to solicit response to the ARS. Both methods replace a multi-page form for respondents to fill out and return. Response rates to both email and web letters exceeded expectations and pave the way not only for significant postage savings, but introduce opportunities for data quality improvements through additional interactive questions. Particular focus is given to the design, development, testing, and implementation of the emails and web letters. Differences in the collection periodicity, employer contacts, security, survey content, email and letter design, employer size (number of worksites), solicitation procedures, testing environment, and other relevant issues were used to determine the best approach for the ARS.

Key Words: Internet, email, solicitation, web

1. Background

The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 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 telephone reporting option only available to establishments that have no changes to their information.

1.1 Introduction of Online Data Collection for the Annual Refiling Survey

In response to the increasing number of businesses in the universe and postage costs, the QCEW program introduced an online collection system (ARS Web) in 2012. Prior to 2012, businesses received an envelope with a cover letter, paper form, and return envelope. Respondents would fill out the paper form by hand and return it in the mail. This ARS form would be reviewed and manually processed by a State analyst. With the introduction of ARS Web, businesses received a similar ARS form, but the new forms included web credentials so that if the respondent wanted to report online, they would have that option. (Peters, 2013.)

The 2012 ARS survey materials mailed to pilot respondents included all of the traditional printed materials: cover letter, survey form, and return envelope, as well as an option to report online. 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. Responses on traditional paper forms and TRS, and through ARS Web from 2012-2014 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. 2012-2014 *ARS Responses by Mode

Survey Year	Web Responses	Paper/TRS Responses	% Web
2012	58,794	883,012	6.2 %
2013	183,626	768,084	19.3%
2014	180,510	476,658	27.5%

* ARS sustained a sample reduction due to funding in 2014.

1.2 Purpose of Testing Web Letters and Email Solicitation

The importance of 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 in excess of one million establishments, data collection costs for the ARS are a significant component of the QCEW annual budget. The printing of solicitation cover letters, survey forms, and mailing and return envelopes for three mailings per survey year, along with the associated mailing 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 second and third mailings, thereby saving money on printing and postage.

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 increase web participation in 2015 by using web letters and email solicitation. With web letters, respondents would be directed solely to online reporting, without the option to report on a paper form. With email solicitation, 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.

2. 2015 ARS Web Letter Pilot

With the success of web reporting and the steady increase of web participation from 2012-2014, QCEW sought to further encourage web reporting. To this end, a one-page letter was designed to replace the package that contained traditional paper forms and return envelopes. This letter would contain a link to the data collection website along with the needed credentials to log into the website and report data online. There would be no paper form and no return envelope included. Respondents would receive the web letter and their only option for reporting would be to log into the online system and report data. Attachment 1 is an example of the web letters that were mailed to respondents for the first mailing in 2015.

Prior to a full scale implementation, a pilot was conducted to test how respondents would react to the web letters. For the 2015 first mailing, approximately 20 percent of the ARS was randomly selected to receive web letters. This group could then be compared to the group that received forms to measure response rate differences between the two data collection modes. Three mailings were conducted over the course of the survey, and the responses to each type of mailing are shown in Tables 2a -2c.

Table 2a. Responses to the First 2015 ARS Mailing

First Mailing	Mailed	Responses	%
Paper Form	469,696	220,648	47.0%
Web Letter	108,622	46,533	42.8%
Difference			-4.1%

After the success of the first web letter mailing, the second mailing was conducted using 50 percent web letters and 50 percent traditional paper forms.

Table 2b. Responses to the Second 2015 ARS Mailing

Second Mailing	Mailed	Responses	%
Paper Form	131,822	52,460	39.8%
Web Letter	131,843	45,075	34.2%
Difference			-5.6%

Finally, the third mailing was conducted again using roughly 50 percent web letters and 50 percent traditional paper forms.

Table 2c. Responses to the Third ARS Mailing

Third Mailing	Mailed	Responses	%
Paper Form	39,324	9,091	23.1%
Web Letter	43,449	7,998	18.4%
Difference			-4.7%

2.1 2015 Web Letter Pilot Results

The QCEW program set out to test the viability of directing respondents toward online reporting by replacing traditional paper forms with a one-page web letter. A vast majority of respondents were able to successfully report data online after receiving a one page letter, rather than a paper form, and taking cost savings into consideration, a 4 to 5 percent reduction in response rate was considered acceptable. The web letter model allows for an additional mailing to non-respondents to recover the 5 percent reduction going forward, and that mailing would cost only a fraction of the savings achieved using web letters.

To assist respondents who are unwilling or unable to report online, a blank version of the ARS survey forms has been made available on the BLS public website so that respondents can download a paper form, fill it out, and return it to their state agency via FAX, or mail (using their own envelope and postage.)

To provide additional support for the ARS response rates, QCEW also incorporated email solicitation into the ARS for 2015.

2.2 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

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.

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 two emails be sent for each solicitation attempt, one with the online account information, and one with the password required to access that online account.

3. 2015 ARS Email Solicitation Pilot

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 2 and 3 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 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 resent 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. An alternate follow-up email was sent to partial respondents, those that had used their credentials to logon to our secure

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.

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 3a for the schedule of email solicitations.

Table 3. 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.

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 two weeks later on October 8th. Responses were extracted from the online database and transmitted to the state agencies weekly, beginning on September 24th.

Table 4a. ARS Web responses for email solicitations

Date of Transmission	Responses by Email Recipients	% of Establishments (21,097)	% of *Eligible 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%

* Eligible establishments = Sampled establishments - undeliverables.

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

Table 4b. ARS Web 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%

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

Table 4c. ARS Web 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%

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

Table 4d. ARS Web 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%

All responses received after the last mail solicitation. No cost savings.

3.1 2015 ARS Email Solicitation Pilot Results

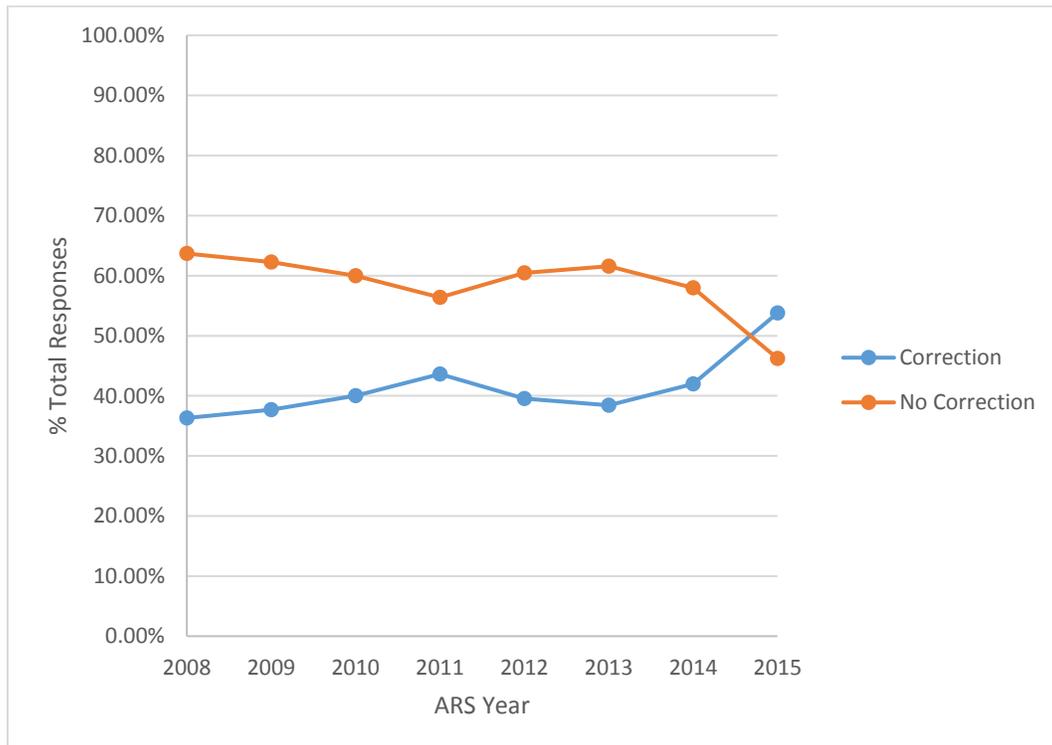
The QCEW program set out to test the viability of soliciting ARS establishments electronically. Would sampled establishments accept an email solicitation as a legitimate survey request from the BLS? Within 24 hours, nearly 17 percent of respondents that received an email solicitation had logged onto our secure website and reported their data. Within five weeks, almost 40 percent of email solicitations had reported their data online. During this same time period, 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.

4. ARS Response Analysis

The main goal of the ARS is to keep the QCEW sample frame accurate. Respondents are asked to review their geographic and industry information and either verify that it is correct or provide an update to correct this information. One concern with moving to Web reporting is the composition of responses to the ARS. Since the source of the data (UI) remains the same, the level of corrections from respondents should be fairly consistent over time. But adding a new collection mode could have an impact on whether or not respondents provide corrections. Will online responses be similar to paper responses or will respondents behave differently when reporting data online? And if respondents behave differently, are they providing more information or less information?

A review of response types from the 2008-2015 surveys shows whether or not a respondent provided a correction to their geographic or industry information.

Figure 1. Percent of ARS Responses with Corrections 2008-2016



From these results, the expansion of web reporting in 2013 coincides with an increase in corrections to geographic and industry information from respondents. Since the main goal of the ARS is to keep the QCEW sample frame current, it is beneficial to receive additional corrections from respondents. In addition to being less costly, online reporting has also increased the effectiveness of the ARS in gathering updates to geographic and industry information from respondents.

5. Conclusion

The success of the 2015 ARS web letter and email solicitation pilots provided the QCEW program with a solid framework for incorporating web letters and electronic solicitation into the full ARS. Web letters were fully incorporated as the entire first and second mailings for 2016, and continued with similar success as the pilot. For email blasts, 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. The size of the third mailing for 2016 was the smallest since the inception of the centrally collected ARS program. Early responses result in the most cost savings so we are particularly interested in maximizing this initial response.

Through our email helpdesk we noticed that some respondents were specifically concerned with the validity of the email survey request because they did not recognize the email address used for solicitation: Helpdesk.ARS@bls.gov. For future email solicitations, the survey requests will come from a more recognizable sender that a respondent will be more likely to recognize and accept as legitimate: AnnualRefilingSurvey@bls.gov

The web letter and email solicitation pilots also offered 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 number 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.

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, 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 the automated email reply that respondents receive if they reply to their solicitation or password emails.

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.³ 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 years to come.

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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.

³ BLS Commissioner's Order No. 1-16. February 17, 2016.

Attachment 1. First Mailing - ARS Web Letter*

<p>Utana Department of Labor Labor Market Information 123 Main Street Room 4 Somecity UA 12345-6789</p>		<p>UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Bureau of Labor Statistics Postal Square Building Suite 4840 2 Massachusetts Ave., NE Washington, DC 20212-0001</p>
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ABC COMPANY
456 FRONT STREET
ANYTOWN UA 98765-4321

October 2014

Dear Employer,

Every three years, your State agency and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics request that you verify general business information about your firm to help us maintain accurate records. Your cooperation is essential so that we are able to produce data that are complete, accurate, and timely.

To reduce costs and save tax dollars, this survey has been moved online and can be completed in about five minutes. Please use the Web ID and Password provided below to log into our secure website: <https://idcfars.bls.gov/>

WEB ID: 990123456789 PASSWORD: Ab123456

This survey is authorized by law 29 U.S. Code, Section 2.

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 by your State agency and BLS 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/qcew/ivf

If you do not log into the website and respond, a paper form will be mailed to you.

Please provide your response within **14 days**. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Emily Thomas
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



* The ARS is mandatory in 26 States and territories. Web letters sent to respondents where the survey is mandatory included a mandatory statement in the third paragraph and referenced the applicable state law requiring a response.

Attachment 2. 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.

Attachment 3. 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 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. Auto-Response 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.