

Measuring effectiveness: PAPERS joint company public awareness survey program

Over 40 companies have participated in the Public Awareness Program Effectiveness Research Survey (PAPERS), a national industry-sponsored evaluation program developed and supported by the American Petroleum Institute (API), Association of Oil Pipelines (AOPL), and the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA).

This broad, industry-wide program provides operators with meaningful, comparable, consistent insight on communications efforts that meet RP1162 regulatory requirements. The survey is conducted every two years. The first was conducted in 2007.

PAPERS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Development

The PAPERS program was originally developed by transmission operators in coordination with Harris Interactive, a large market research firm known for pioneering leadership in the online market research industry. In 2005, Harris Interactive conducted a pilot study on behalf of API to establish a robust approach to meeting the recommendations of RP1162.

Methodology

The PAPERS program methodology was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of each pipeline operator's program. The survey's intent under the program is to measure the reception and comprehension of key messages by each of the four key stakeholder audiences. The surveys include respondents along the right-of-way for all company designated pipeline systems. The results are presented in aggregate for the individual company – not by pipeline system.

The PAPERS program uses the most effective research approach for each of the stakeholder audiences identified in RP1162: the Affected Public, Public Officials, Emergency Officials and Excavators.

For the Affected Public, direct mail methodology is used, with an option to participate using an online instrument. A mail survey is the most cost effective methodological approach, because of the preponderance of rural (C&D county) households. A mail survey can be conducted at a much lower cost than telephone surveys with greater sample availability. In addition, the mail survey provides a wider range of responses for open-ended questions and is better received because people can fill it out at their convenience, as opposed to the intrusive nature of telephone interviewing.

For the Additional Audiences, a telephone methodology is used. When conducting research with a hard to reach professional audience, it is important to identify the most effective methodology. In the case of Public Officials, Emergency Responders and Excavators it is believed that telephone interviewing is the most effective methodology. Professional audiences of this nature have lower response rates using any methodology; however, combined with a lack of names in the sample files, these audiences become even more difficult to reach by mail.

To provide the most accurate and robust survey results, the desired sampling frame for the Affected Public and Additional Audiences are based on the database used to fulfill an operator’s pipeline awareness campaign. In addition to, or as a supplement if necessary, the PAPERS program may utilize GIS data, public awareness stakeholder lists, and/or directory and other information to locate addresses within a certain buffer zone (generally 660 feet or 1,000 feet) or within a geographic jurisdiction adjacent to the pipelines. With this information, a sufficient number of potential respondents are randomly selected to complete the survey.

Sample size

The determination of sample size depends on the size of the operator and the number of completed responses desired. An operator with greater than 500 miles of pipeline is considered a “large operator;” an operator with fewer than 500 miles of pipeline is considered a “small operator.”

For large operators, total desired completed responses are 400. This includes 150 completed responses for both the Affected Public and Excavators and 50 completed responses for Emergency Officials and Public Officials. The completed response total for small operators is 235, which includes 75 completed responses for the Affected Public, 100 completed responses for Excavators and 30 each for Emergency Officials and Public Officials. This represents a minimum quota of the amount of data that is needed for the effectiveness evaluation; if the actual response/cooperation rates exceeds that which was realized historically, then this extra data is included in order to improve the level of precision.

The sample size was determined using an assumed response rate of 2.2% for the Direct Mail respondents and a cooperation rate of between 55% and 65% for the Telephone respondents. These figures were generated from previous research of these population groups (pilot test prior to 2007, the study in 2007 – conducted by Harris Interactive, and the two studies in 2009 and 2011 – conducted by Customer Care Measurement and Consulting (CCMC). These response/cooperation rates were then used to extrapolate what sample size would be needed so that a level of precision @ 95% confidence of at least ±4.8% - 8.0% (Affected Public) and ±3.7% - 6.2% (Additional Audiences) could be generated for large companies, and at least ±6.8% - 11.4% (Affected Public) and ±4.7% - 7.8% (Additional Audiences) for Small companies.

There may be instances where pipelines overlap and respondents qualify to participate in more than one operator’s survey. The PAPERS program can identify the respondents that belong to more than one company, ensuring their representation in each individual company’s results.

The margin of error (95% level of confidence) for the Aggregate results in the PAPERS program is as follows to date:

Criterion	2007	2009	2011
Margin of Error (95% level of confidence)	Affected Public: ±0.9% – 1.4% Additional Audiences: ±1.0% – 1.6%	Affected Public: ±0.8% – 1.3% Additional Audiences: ±0.8% – 1.3%	Affected Public: ±0.8% – 1.4% Additional Audiences: ±0.8% – 1.4%

Survey analysis

The PAPERS program allows quantifiable measurements over time so that participating pipeline operators have a tool to help understand successes or barriers of the instituted programs. Using a secure reporting portal, companies can review their individual survey results in the form of compliance metrics, including national, regional and other peer group-based benchmark comparisons in order to assess awareness metrics for each of the target survey audience groups.

Companies can apply the findings from the PAPERS program to guide any future improvements in the company's public awareness program.

Pre-test materials

The PAPERS program survey does not perform a pre-test. This function is performed by Paradigm Alliance, Inc. in the development of message types and the content of messages.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

2007 Survey

Harris Interactive, a leading strategic research firm with a depth of knowledge in the energy industry, conducted the 2007 joint survey, which involved 18 companies.

2009 Survey

Customer Care Measurement & Consulting, an Alexandria, Virginia survey research firm with more than 30 years of experience, conducted the 2009 joint survey, which involved 26 companies.

2011 Survey

Customer Care Measurement & Consulting, an Alexandria, Virginia survey research firm conducted the 2011 joint survey, which included 22 companies.

2013 Survey

Customer Care Measurement & Consulting, an Alexandria, Virginia survey research firm will be conducting the 2013 joint survey.