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e-Labor Bulletin

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Labor Market Information Center SD Department of Labor & Regulation

What is the Annual Refiling Survey and why is it important?

Each year, approximately 4,000 South Dakota businesses are selected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to participate in an Annual Refiling Survey. What is it, and why is it important?

The Annual Refiling Survey (ARS) is an important component of the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program because it helps ensure businesses are appropriately categorized by industry.The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program makes it possible for us to publish a quarterly count of employment and wages by industry at the county, Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and state level. The data is based on reports submitted quarterly by employers to South Dakota's Unemployment Insurance Tax program, accounting for about 98 percent of jobs. Because the QCEW program is a federal-state cooperative program with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the data is also available at the national level, as well as available for all other states. The Labor Market Information Center oversees the program in South Dakota.

The Annual Refiling Survey is what helps us ensure industry classification of businesses is appropriate. In turn, it helps ensure the labor market statistics produced and published by industry are accurate and reflective of what is going on in the economy.

The main purpose of the Annual Refiling Survey (ARS) is to verify or correct the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes assigned to establishments. Other important purposes of the ARS are to verify or update establishments' mailing and physical location addresses and geographic codes such as county and township. Even if a business is closed, the BLS still needs to know this information.

Employers are also asked to identify new worksite locations in the state. If multiple establishment employers meet Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program reporting criteria, a Multiple Worksite Report (MWR) request is made asking for employment and wages for each worksite quarterly. Thus, the ARS is also used to identify new potential MWR-eligible employers.

The ARS is conducted every year, with approximately one-third of all U.S. businesses with four or more employees contacted annually. This means businesses are contacted to verify their industry and physical location address once every three years. For example, a company selected to participate in the 2016 Annual Refiling Survey will not be contacted for this information again until 2019.

A business selected to participate in the ARS will receive a mailing from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics with instructions for completing the survey online. If online completion is not possible, the form may be printed and mailed or faxed in. See examples (in Adobe PDF) of the ARS mailing for single-location businesses and businesses with multiple locations. More information regarding this survey is available on the BLS website through answers to frequently asked questions.

We would like to express our appreciation to South Dakota businesses who have participated in the Annual Refiling Survey. South Dakota consistently has one of the highest ARS response rates in the nation, around 90 percent. We appreciate your cooperation and assistance in helping ensure the accuracy of the industry data we are able to provide through the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages program.