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The return of Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey

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The Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey (CBECS) is a well-known national survey that collects key benchmark information on U.S. commercial buildings, providing data on energy use and other related characteristics. It is used by private and public stakeholders to track industry progress, gain high-level understanding of how buildings compare to similar peers and inform policy decisions.

The release of the 2007 CBECS survey results - which used a new lower-cost methodology - were infamously canceled when the Energy Information Administration deemed that the data was not statistically significant. Then, in 2011 the EIA canceled the project entirely when its budget was cut. The move left the energy efficiency industry reliant on information from the 2003 survey and received widespread (negative) national media attention from places like The New York Times.

In a turn of events that largely flew under the radar, the EIA recently announced on its website that work on CBECS will be resumed. While a survey like CBECS can always be improved, we view this as a positive for the industry as it will provide publically available, up-to-date information of commercial building energy consumption.

CBECS followers will need to remain patient, as the EIA will field a survey for the reference year 2012 in April 2013, and will not publish the results until 1H 2014.

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