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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-06-272](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

To conduct a successful census, it is important that the U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau) produce the most complete and accurate address file and maps for 2010. For this review, GAO's specific objectives were to determine the extent to which (1) the Bureau's efforts to modernize the address file and maps are addressing problems experienced during the 2000 Census, (2) the Bureau is managing emerging address file and map issues, (3) the Bureau is able to collect and transmit address and mapping data using mobile computing devices (MCD) equipped with global positioning system (GPS) technology, and (4) the Bureau has a plan to update the address file and maps in areas affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. GAO reviewed the Bureau's progress in modernizing both the address file and maps.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Commerce direct the Bureau to mitigate risks in building its address file and maps. Specific actions include setting firm dates to complete research and evaluations and develop resulting action plans; reevaluating the schedule and staffing workloads for conducting address canvassing; and developing plans to assess resources needed to update the address file and maps along the Gulf Coast. In commenting on a draft of this report, Commerce agreed with each of GAO's three recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-272.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-6806 or farrellb@gao.gov.

2010 CENSUS

Census Bureau Needs to Take Prompt Actions to Resolve Long-standing and Emerging Address and Mapping Challenges

What GAO Found

The Bureau's address and map modernization efforts have progressed in some areas. The Bureau is researching how to correct addresses that were duplicated, missed, deleted, and incorrectly located on maps. However, some deadlines for completing research are not firm, while other deadlines that had been set continue to slip. Thus, whether research will be completed in enough time to allow the Bureau to develop new procedures to improve the 2010 address file is unknown. Also, the Bureau has not fully addressed emerging issues. For one such issue, the Bureau has acknowledged the compressed time frame for completing address canvassing—an operation where census workers walk every street in the country to verify addresses and maps—but has not reevaluated the associated schedule or staffing workloads. Also, the Bureau has allotted only 6 weeks to conduct address canvassing it completed in 18 weeks in 2000 and expanded the operation from urban areas in 2000 to the entire country in 2010.

Mobile Computing Devices for Collecting and Transmitting Field Data



Source: GAO.

Whether the Bureau can collect and transmit address and mapping data using the MCD is unknown. The MCD, tested during 2006 address canvassing, was slow and locked up frequently. Bureau officials said the MCD's performance is an issue, but a new MCD to be developed through a contract awarded in March 2006 will be reliable. However, the MCD will not be tested until the 2008 Dress Rehearsal, and if problems emerge, little time will remain to develop, test, and incorporate refinements. If after the Dress Rehearsal the MCD is found unreliable, the Bureau could face the remote but daunting possibility of reverting to the costly paper-based census of 2000.

Bureau officials do not believe a specific plan is needed to update the addresses and maps for areas affected by the hurricanes. Securing a count is difficult under normal conditions, and existing procedures may be insufficient to update addresses and maps after the hurricanes' destruction—made even more difficult as streets, housing, and population will be in flux.