



# Report In Brief

U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General

September 2007



## Why We Did This Review

This follow-up assessed the bureau's and Department's progress in (1) implementing our 2006 recommendations regarding Census's Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) program, and (2) identifying ways to better manage the program, contain FECA costs for the 2008 dress rehearsal and 2010 decennial operations, return current claimants to work, whenever feasible, and help prevent unnecessary FECA costs by undertaking effective training programs and other management controls and oversight.

## Background

During our March 2006 comprehensive program review, we found the Census Bureau's FECA costs totaled approximately \$5.59 million (out of a departmental total of almost \$14.5 million) for the period of July 1, 2004, to June 30, 2005. The bureau's FECA costs were much higher during the conduct of the 2000 decennial census. The bureau paid almost \$14.2 million in FECA benefits for the period of July 1, 2000, to June 30, 2001. We identified 44 active claims from the 1990 decennial and 183 from the 2000 decennial.

To view the full report, visit [www.oig.doc.gov/oig/reports/2007/IPE-18592.pdf](http://www.oig.doc.gov/oig/reports/2007/IPE-18592.pdf)

## U.S. Census Bureau

### *Preparing for Census 2010: Follow-up Review of the Workers' Compensation Program at the Census Bureau Reveals Limited Efforts to Address Previous OIG Recommendations (IPE-18592)*

#### What We Found

We found the bureau had made little progress in developing a strategy to return current claimants back to work and effectively manage a workers' compensation program for the 2008 dress rehearsal or the 2010 operations. Decennial and field operations managers at the bureau's headquarters told us they had not fully addressed our March 2006 report and its recommendations regarding decennial operations and a workers' compensation strategy because of internal debate over the appropriate direction of the bureau's plan and other pressing priorities, such as the move into a new headquarters facility.

We also found only a few of the bureau's employee handbooks and training materials had been updated with additional information on workers' compensation, and those that had did not include the specific guidance called for in our 2006 recommendations. In addition, we found limited coordination among Census headquarters, regional, and local staff on returning current claimants to work, including those who were injured in the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses. Regional and local office staff had received little, if any, targeted training or guidance on managing workers' compensation for the 2008 dress rehearsal.

#### What We Recommended

We recommended the Census Bureau work with the Department's Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs as appropriate to ensure a number of actions, including the following:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive Census 2010 workers' compensation management initiative, incorporate the initiative into dress rehearsal and 2010 decennial training and administrative manuals, and train all relevant headquarters, regional, and field staff on the initiative.
2. Ensure that the bureau's human resources, decennial management, field operations, and administrative staff work together to develop and implement a comprehensive return-to-work strategy for injured 2010 decennial employees, as well as current claimants on Census's FECA rolls and incorporate the strategy into the 2008 dress rehearsal and decennial training and administrative manuals.
3. Identify current FECA claimants who could be offered jobs in the 2010 decennial or the preparatory operations and work with the Department of Labor and Commerce's Office of Human Resources Management to return them to work as soon as possible or to remove them from the FECA rolls if job offers are not accepted.