



March 25, 2009

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## ADDRESS CANVASSING

### An Accurate Census Count Depends on a Complete and Accurate Address List

#### What is Address Canvassing?

- The Census Bureau needs the address and physical location of each living quarter in the United States to conduct the census. During the address canvassing operation, the Census Bureau verifies that its master address list and maps are accurate so we can mail or hand-deliver questionnaires to housing units and potential group quarters. A complete and accurate address list is the cornerstone of a successful census.

#### How Does Address Canvassing Work?

- To update the nation's 145 million addresses, census workers around the nation conduct a massive operation to look for every place where people live, stay, or could live or stay. Census workers compare what they see on the ground to what is shown on the Census Bureau's address list. Based on their findings, the census workers will verify, update, or delete addresses already on the list, and add addresses that are missing from the list. At the same time, they will also update maps so they accurately reflect what is on the ground. In most cases, census workers will knock on doors to verify addresses and inquire about additional living quarters on the premises.

#### What's New for Address Canvassing for the 2010 Census?

- For the first time, the 2010 census workers will conduct address canvassing using a GPS-enabled handheld computer. The new technology allows census workers to pinpoint and upload coordinates for each structure containing living quarters into the Census Bureau's master address file and digital maps. The GPS coordinates will ensure that each structure is recorded within the correct block — which is particularly important since census data are the basis for the redrawing of congressional and state legislative districts.
- This is also the first time that group quarters (such as dormitories, group homes, prisons, and homeless shelters) are part of the address canvassing operation, which should improve both the accuracy and coverage of the final count.

#### What Are the Advantages of the New Hand-Held Computers?

- The new hand-held computers will improve the accuracy of the address canvassing operation, lending an unprecedented level of precision and accuracy to the process, eliminating the need for census workers to carry paper maps, and virtually eliminating the risk of transcription errors. The

ability to capture GPS coordinates for most of the nation's housing units will greatly reduce the number of geographic coding errors caused by using paper maps in previous counts.

- The hand-held computers allow two-way communication: census workers will transmit their updated work on a daily basis. They will transmit their timesheets and text messages to their crew leaders, and crew leaders will send new assignments and messages back to the census workers in the field.

### What Else is Done to Ensure a Complete and Accurate Mailing List?

- During the past decade, the Census Bureau has been actively working on updating its geographic databases and master address files. From implementing the Local Update of Census Address program where more than 11,500 tribal, state and local governments participated in a review of the Census Bureau's address list for their area, to increasing the precision of the GPS mapping, many advances have been made to compile the most comprehensive listing of addresses in the nation.
- One final opportunity to add addresses prior to the mailing of the census questionnaires will take place as part of a new construction program in early 2010.

### How is Confidentiality Protected During Address Canvassing?

- Hand-held computers can only be turned on by entering the user's password and thumbprint. Other security features include state-of-the-art encryption software, antivirus protection and automatic shutdown after a period of inactivity.
- All census information collected, including addresses, are confidential and protected by law. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share respondents' answers with the FBI, the CIA, Welfare, Immigration, or any other government agency. No court of law, not even the President of the United States, can find out respondents' answers. All Census Bureau employees take an oath for life to keep census information confidential. Any violation of that oath is punishable by a fine of up to \$250,000 and five years in prison.
- Census workers can be identified by the official Census Bureau badge they carry. 2010 Census workers will never ask for bank or social security information.

### Fast Facts about Address Canvassing:

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| • Number of housing unit addresses that need to be verified: | 145 million              |
| • Number of census workers hired for address canvassing:     | 140,000                  |
| • Number of hand-held computers to be used:                  | 151,000                  |
| • Dates of operation:  | March 30 – Mid-July 2009 |
| • Number of local census offices that manage operations:     | 151                      |

**For more information about the 2010 Census, visit [www.2010census.gov](http://www.2010census.gov)**