

Census Workers to Verify Addresses in the U.S.

First Major 2010 Census Operation to Employ 140,000

The Census Bureau will launch a massive operation on March 30 to verify and update more than 145 million addresses as it prepares to conduct the 2010 Census.

Nationwide, more than 140,000 census workers will participate in the address canvassing operation, a critically important first step in assuring that every housing unit receives a census questionnaire in March 2010. All information is kept confidential. The countdown to the 2010 Census is officially one year out on April 1.

“A complete and accurate address list is the cornerstone of a successful census,” said Tom Mesenbourg, acting director of the U.S. Census Bureau. “Building on the achievements of the 2000 Census, we have been testing and preparing for the 2010 count all decade, and we’re ready to fulfill our constitutional mandate to count everyone living in the United States.”

The first publicly visible activity of the 2010 Census is ahead of schedule. Address canvassing kicks off a week earlier than originally planned and should conclude by mid-July. The operation will use new hand-held computers equipped with GPS to increase geographic accuracy. 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 primary goal of the census is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place,” Mesenbourg said. “Because the census is used for reapportioning seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and the distribution of more than \$300 billion in federal dollars every year to state and local governments, it’s essential to get this first step right.”

Over the last several years, 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.

The address canvassing operation will be conducted out of 151 local census offices across the U.S, with most offices beginning on April 6. In most cases, census workers will knock on doors to verify addresses and inquire about additional living quarters on the premises. This is the first census to include group quarters (such as dormitories, group homes, prisons and homeless shelters) in the address canvassing operation, which should improve both the accuracy and coverage of the final count.

There will be one final opportunity to add new home construction in early 2010 prior to the mailing of the census questionnaires.

Census workers can be identified by the official Census Bureau badge they carry. During the address canvassing operation, census workers may ask to verify a housing structure's address and whether there are additional living quarters on the property.

2010 Census workers will never ask for bank or social security information. 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 IRS, CIA, Welfare, Immigration, or any other government agency. No court of law or law enforcement agency can find out respondents' answers. All Census Bureau employees — including temporary 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.