

Better Business

BBB Consumer Tips

Phony BBB E-mail Spreads Fiction about 2010 Census; Get the Facts

An e-mail which falsely claims to be from the Better Business Bureau about the upcoming 2010 Census is inaccurate and BBB is advising consumers to get the facts.

In March of 2010, census forms will be delivered to every residence in the United States and Puerto Rico. When you receive yours, just answer the 10 short questions and then mail the form back in the postage-paid envelope provided. If you don't mail the form back, you may receive a visit from a census taker, who will ask you the questions from the form. A census taker must follow-up in person with every address that doesn't mail back the form in order to obtain the responses.

The Census is Safe

- * The 2010 Census will ask for name, gender, age, race, ethnicity, relationship, and whether you own or rent your home – just 10 simple questions that will take about 10 minutes to answer.
- * The Census Bureau safeguards all census responses.
- * Your answers are protected by law and are not shared with anyone. The census taker who collects your information is sworn for life to protect your data under Federal Law Title 13. Those who violate the oath face criminal penalties. Under federal law, the penalty for unlawful disclosure is a fine of up to \$250,000, imprisonment up to 5 years, or both.

When Census Takers will be Going Door-to-Door

- * From April to July 2010, the Census Bureau will knock on the door of every household that does not mail back a completed 2010 Census form.

- * It's critical that you take just 10 minutes to fill out and mail back your form rather than wait for a census worker to show up on your doorstep. About \$85 million in taxpayer dollars are saved for every one percent increase in mail response.
- * The Census Bureau must get a census form to – and a completed form back from – every residence in the United States. That's more than 130 million addresses. This is why the census is the largest domestic mobilization our nation undertakes.

How to Identify a Census Taker

If a U.S. Census Bureau employee knocks on your door, here are some recognition tips to assure the validity of the employee:

- * The census taker must present an ID badge that contains a Department of Commerce watermark and expiration date. The census taker may also be carrying a bag with a Census Bureau logo.
- * The census taker will provide you with supervisor contact information and/or the Local Census Office phone number for verification, if asked.
- * The census taker will ONLY ask you the questions that appear on the census form.

What the 2010 Census DOES NOT Ask

- * 2010 Census takers will not ask you for your social security number, bank account number, or credit card number.
- * 2010 Census takers also never solicit for donations and will never contact you by e-mail.

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