



CONSUMER NEWS

SAN DIEGO CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

2010 CENSUS SCAMS

March 2010

Every ten years, the United States Constitution requires the Federal government to count every resident in the country. The 2010 Census is now underway.

Census information is kept private by the government. It is used to determine the number of seats each state occupies in the U.S. House of Representatives based on population changes. It also affects how federal funding is spent each year on infrastructure and services.

While the U.S. Census provides an opportunity for each citizen to be counted, it also gives thieves an opportunity to gain personal, sensitive information by pretending to work for the U.S. Census Bureau.

Thieves are always looking for a situation where a person will give them information without questioning the need for it. The Census is likely to be the ruse used by thieves. Don't become a victim.

With a person's information, con-artists are able to steal the person's identity, empty the person's bank accounts and destroy his/her credit

by acquiring credit cards in his/her name.

HOW TO TELL A REAL CENSUS FORM FROM A FAKE ONE:

Beginning in March, every household should receive a ten-question census form from the U.S.

Government. The questions will include your name, age, gender, ethnicity, type of residence, phone number, and the number of people living with you. The form will contain a postage-paid return envelope. You can view an example census questionnaire online at www.2010.census.gov.

The form will NOT ask for your social security number, credit-card number or any bank account information. Further, the form will NOT ask for donations or any sort of payment.

If you receive a form in the mail purporting to be from the U.S. Census Bureau that asks for money, account information or your social security number--DO NOT REPLY. It is a scam that should be

reported to the San Diego Police Dept. Financial Crimes Unit (619) 531-2545, and the United States Postal Service (800) 372-8347. The City Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit will review any investigation reports filed by police for possible criminal charges.

HOW TO TELL A REAL CENSUS WORKER FROM A THIEF:

If you do NOT mail back a completed census form, a census taker will visit your home to get a response to the ten questions.

Census takers will be knocking on doors from April to July 2010. But they are only going to households that did NOT return a census form. If you already mailed in the form, you should not receive a visit.

Under no circumstances will a census taker ask to enter your home.

Census takers must present an ID badge, which will have an expiration date and Department of Commerce watermark.

