

The 2010 Census: What Apartment Operators Need to Know

UPDATED June 2010

The U.S. Census Bureau is preparing for the 2010 Census. This constitutionally mandated survey is conducted every 10 years for the purpose of counting every resident in the U.S. The information is used to determine how federal dollars are spent in communities for services such as hospitals, schools, public work projects and emergency services. It also affects the number of seats each state is allocated in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Most households, including those in apartment buildings, should receive Census questionnaires in the mail in March 2010. (A sample questionnaire is available at <http://bit.ly/7Imp35>.) Responses are due by April 1, 2010. If households do not return their completed forms by the end of April, apartment operators can expect Census enumerators to visit their communities in an effort to get residents who have not responded to complete the form. These visits will take place from approximately May through August 2010.

Participation in the Census is required by law, so property managers are advised to provide Census enumerators with reasonable access to requested individual apartments. This includes allowing enumerators to knock on apartment doors, or, where present, buzz apartment call boxes. Enumerators may have to return to the property several times to secure interviews, and these repeat visits should be accommodated.

If enumerators are unable to contact apartment residents, they may ask a property manager for occupant information. Property staff should cooperate to the extent they can, and enumerators are required to allow for a reasonable amount of time for compilation of information.

In all cases, property managers should ask for official identification before cooperating with any Census Bureau employees, which in most cases will be limited to a Census badge and bag. (If property managers are uncertain about a Census enumerator's identity, they can contact the [Regional Census Centers](#) to confirm their employment by the Census Bureau as official enumerators. The Centers are listed at <http://bit.ly/6LoThH>.)

JUNE 2010 UPDATE:

Earlier this year, Census Bureau [Guidance](#) (<http://bit.ly/b4lrpt>) to NAA/NMHC encouraged apartment operators to provide information about residents after Census workers have been unable to contact the resident (three personal visits and three phone calls). That document indicated that apartment firms should provide Census workers with the information necessary to complete the Census questionnaire to the best of their knowledge.

NAA/NMHC have learned that this guidance exceeds the minimum legal requirements. This guidance is still valid and, if followed, will provide the Census Bureau with valuable data that will be used to more effectively allocate federal funding for services and infrastructure.

However, according to Title 13, Section 223 of the U.S. Code, apartment firms are required only to: (1) furnish the names of the occupants of the premises; or (2) provide Census workers free ingress to and egress from the property.

Census enumerators are trained to seek access to the property and knock on unit doors to contact the resident directly. They have not been instructed to simply request a list of residents from the property manager. They are also never instructed to challenge property owners with threats of fines for failure to comply, as has been reported in one particular region.

If firms have questions about a particular Census worker or concerns about his/her legitimacy, they are encouraged to call their [Regional Census Centers](http://bit.ly/6LoThH) (<http://bit.ly/6LoThH>).

Additional Surveys

Census employees may also visit apartment properties outside of the 2010 Census as part of several other surveys sponsored by the Census Bureau, including the American Community Survey (ACS). (See <http://bit.ly/4VVIxQ>.) The ACS is considered part of the Census and thus participation is also mandatory. Property managers should provide the same level of access and cooperation to ACS field representatives as to Census 2010 enumerators.

In contrast, other Census Bureau surveys, such as the American Housing Survey and the Current Population Survey, are voluntary. While the multifamily industry benefits from the data collected from households during these surveys, property managers are not required to allow the same level of access or to provide the same level of cooperation as with the Census or American Community Survey.

All information collected during federal censuses and surveys is kept confidential (per Title 13) and only used for compiling aggregate statistics.