

## **(Not) Fraud Alert – American Community Survey**

**June 2018**

We have received a few telephone calls with concerns relating to a survey mailing sent out by the Census Bureau. As it gets increasingly difficult to sort out what U.S. mail is legitimate and which are scams, we share with you the following as it relates to this particular mailing. Is **“The American Community Survey”** a legitimate survey conducted by the Census Bureau?

### **Yes it is.**

- ✓ Every year, the U.S. Census Bureau contacts over 3.5 million households across the country to participate in the American Community Survey. When you respond to the survey, you are doing your part to ensure decisions about your community can be made using the best data available.
- ✓ Unlike the every-10-year census, this survey continues all year, every year. They randomly sample addresses in every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
- ✓ Answers are collected to create up-to-date statistics used by many federal, state, tribal, and local leaders. Some American Community Survey questions have been asked in the decennial census since it first began in 1790.
- ✓ When you respond to the ACS, you are doing your part to help your community plan hospitals and schools, support school lunch programs, improve emergency services, build bridges, inform businesses looking to add jobs and expand to new markets, and more.

**Do you want to verify that mail, phone calls or in-person interviews are legitimate?** If your household has been contacted to complete the American Community Survey and you would like to verify that this survey is legitimate, you can call toll-free 1-800-354-7271.

### **Is my response to the American Community Survey required?**

- ✓ If your address was selected for the American Community Survey, you **are** legally obligated to answer all the questions, as accurately as you can. The relevant laws are Title 18 U.S.C Section 3571 and Section 3559, which amends Title 13 U.S.C. Section 221.
- ✓ Your answers are important. The American Community Survey is sent to a small percentage of our population on a rotating basis. As part of a sample, you represent many other people.

### **Why is the ACS required by law?**

- ✓ Response to the survey is required by law because the American Community Survey is part of the decennial census, replacing the "long form" that previously was sent to a percentage of households once every 10 years.

### **Why was I selected?**

- ✓ Your address was randomly selected through a process of scientific sampling and represents thousands of other households like yours. They randomly select about 3.5 million addresses each year to respond to the survey.

### **Can my address be removed?**

- ✓ An address may not be removed from the American Community Survey sample as the validity of the sample data would quickly deteriorate if selected households were exempted.

They try to keep the number of households in the sample as small as possible in order to limit the cost of the survey and reduce the impact on respondents. They also take steps to reduce the chance that a household will get the survey more than once in a 5-year period.

### **Is my privacy protected?**

The Census Bureau is legally bound to strict confidentiality requirements and we never reveal your identity to anybody else. When you respond to the American Community Survey, your individual records are not shared with anyone, including federal agencies and law enforcement entities. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share respondents' answers with anyone, -- not the IRS, not the FBI, not the CIA, and not with any other government agency.

All Census Bureau employees take an oath of nondisclosure and are sworn for life to protect all information that could identify individuals. Any employee who violates the provisions of the oath is subject to a fine up to \$250,000 or a prison sentence up to 5 years, or both.

**They never reveal your identity to anybody else.** When they process the information collected on the American Community Survey (ACS), individuals' names and other personal identifiers are deleted from the files used to tabulate this data. They do not maintain a national database with the names, addresses, and personal information collected by the ACS.

Additional information can be found at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about/top-questions-about-the-survey.html>

### **Monthly Fraud Alerts courtesy of...**

#### **[Bucks County Crimes Against Older Adults Task Force](#)**

Bucks County District Attorney's Office  
215-348-6344  
Bucks County Area Agency on Aging  
267-880-5700  
Bucks County Coroner's Office  
215-348-3852  
Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA)  
1-800-675-6900

A Woman's Place (AWP)  
1-800-220-8116  
Bucks County Office of Consumer Protection  
215-348-6060  
Bucks County Register of Wills  
215-348-6265

<https://www.crimesagainstolderadultsbucks.org> 24 - HOUR HOTLINE: 1-800-490-8505