



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Bureau of the Census
Washington, DC 20233-0001

MEMORANDUM FOR Distribution

From: Cynthia Clark
 Associate Director for Methodology and Standards

Subject: Field Infrastructure: Supply Ordering Process

I am pleased to present the executive summary of one of the evaluation studies for the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal. The dress rehearsal was conducted in three sites — Columbia, South Carolina; Menominee County, Wisconsin; and Sacramento, California. The evaluation studies cover detailed aspects of eight broad areas related to the census dress rehearsal — census questionnaire, address list, coverage measurement, coverage improvement, promotion activities, procedures addressing multiple options for census reporting, field operations, and technology.

The executive summary for each evaluation study is also available on the Census Bureau Internet site (<http://www.census.gov/census2000> and click on the link to “Evaluation”). Copies of the complete report may be obtained by contacting Carnelle Sligh at (301) 457-3525 or by e-mail at carnelle.e.sligh@ccmail.census.gov. Please note that the complete copy of the following reports will not be publically released: reports regarding procedures addressing multiple options for census reporting and the Evaluation of Housing Unit Coverage on the Master Address File.

The evaluations are distributed broadly to promote the open and thorough review of census processes and procedures. The primary purpose of the dress rehearsal is to simulate portions of the environment we anticipate for Census 2000, so we can identify and correct potential problems in the processes. Thus, the purpose of the evaluation studies is to provide analysis to support time critical review and possible refinements of Census 2000 operations and procedures.

The analysis and recommendations in the evaluation study reports are those of staff working on specific evaluations and, thus, do not represent the official position of the Census Bureau. They represent the results of an evaluation of a component of the census plan. They will be used to analyze and improve processes and procedures for Census 2000. The individual evaluation recommendations have not all yet been reviewed for incorporation in the official plan for Census 2000. These evaluation study reports will be used as input to the decision making process to refine the plans for Census 2000.

The Census Bureau will issue a report that synthesizes the recommendations from all the evaluation studies and provides the Census Bureau review of the dress rehearsal operation. This report will also indicate the Census Bureau’s official position on the utilization of these results in the Census 2000 operation. This report will be available July 30th.

Field Infrastructure: Supply Ordering Process

May 1999

Christine L. Hough
Field Division

Executive Summary

The objective of the Supply Ordering Process Evaluation Study is to provide an assessment of the Census Bureau's ability to successfully supply the necessary office equipment and furniture, census operational and administrative forms, as well as the office and field staffs' supplies necessary for the successful completion of the office and field census-taking activities during the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal. This evaluation has discerned whether the supplies were received in adequate quantities and in a timely manner, as well as how smoothly the "resupply" process functioned during the 2000 Census Dress Rehearsal. The intent is to provide a *broad*, but nonetheless, accurate assessment of how well the supply receipt and ordering processes functioned during the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal. Based on the information provided by the staffs of the dress rehearsal offices and, in some cases, knowledgeable staff members from the dress rehearsal Regional Census Centers, the supply receipt and ordering activities of the Dress Rehearsal offices were, at the very least, functionally successful.

Office Furniture and Equipment

In most cases, the necessary supplies to open and set up the offices were provided in a timely fashion and in the necessary quantities. Occasionally, an item may have been provided in a lesser quantity than actually expected or not included in the initial shipment, but any such deficiency was quickly remedied. All three of the offices were sufficiently furnished and supplied with office equipment and general supplies which allowed the offices to begin their census-taking activities as scheduled. In many instances, office supplies were provided in greater quantities than originally expected. No responses or comments were received from any Dress Rehearsal site which indicated that a lack of office furniture or equipment significantly interfered with the opening and setting up of any of the three dress rehearsal offices.

Operational Kits, Forms, and Supplies

Overall, operational kits and forms were provided to the offices in time for the specified field and office activities. On a few occasions, certain supply items which were an integral part of an operation (such as flashlights for the T-Night Operation or manilla folders for recruiting activities) had to be obtained locally. Some office supply items which were specifically requested by the staffs of the offices arrived late, and a few never arrived at all. However, considering the vast number of different supply items needed by each office to operate the actual office space as well as provide the field staffs with the necessary supplies, the instances in which supplies arrived too late or not at all were few and far between.

Resupply/Reorder

The resupply/reordering aspect of the supply process functioned in a minimally adequate fashion in the two dress rehearsal sites for which information was provided. In the Columbia, SC Local Census Office, an average of 16 calendar days elapsed before the requested supplies were received in the office. There were instances cited from this office in which resupply orders that had been transmitted to the Regional Census Center were never placed with GSA. In these instances, Columbia Local Census Office personnel were required to obtain the necessary supplies elsewhere. Additionally, the Sacramento Local Census Office frequently indicated that supplies that were reordered in one calendar month were received in the office during the following month. An accurate assessment of how long it took to actually receive the reordered supplies is difficult to discern from entries of this type since the actual time elapsed could have been anywhere from a day or two to more than four weeks.

The major recommendation from the Local Census Offices is that the Local Census Offices be allowed to assume direct and full responsibility for the reordering of additional supplies. This recommendation is under consideration, but there are major financial control and accountability issues that go along with such responsibility. Therefore, problems of this nature will, instead, be addressed for Census 2000 by providing more detailed training to the RCC personnel responsible for transmitting resupply orders to GSA. This training will emphasize the requirement that the RCC must forward all resupply orders to GSA within three working days or, in the event that the resupply order has not been authorized by the RCC, the RCC must notify the LCO of the fact that the order has not been authorized and, consequently, will not be filled.