

CENSUS from page 1A

According to the program, “Partnership efforts for the Census Bureau encompass building and engaging trusted voices to assist in meeting the overall 2020 Census goal of counting everyone once, only once, and in the right place.”

While these local and regional partnerships will work with U.S. Census Bureau staff to find ways to reduce the non-response rate for the community and improve the accuracy of the local count, the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) is tasked with making sure that all addresses in the county of been verified.

“We are that point agent for the county to make sure that we

are communicating with the Census Bureau about the addresses in Lane County so they can do a correct count,” said LCOG Executive Director Brenda Wilson.

Focus on Florence states “The 2020 Census will count every person in the country, no matter where they’re from, how old they are or where they’re living.”

In addition to her role at LCOG, Wilson has volunteered to coordinate a “complete count committee” for the county to optimize accuracy.

“It’s really important, especially for smaller cities,” said Wilson. “We’re talking SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program), Medicaid, Medicare,

educational funds, school lunch programs, Head Start, WIC (Women, Infants and Children), Section 8, children’s health insurance.”

Invitations to respond to the census online are scheduled to appear in Oregon mailboxes March 12 through March 20. Toward the end of that month, reminder letters will be sent out to those who haven’t responded. Between April 8-16, paper copies of the census will be distributed. Then from April 20-27, a final reminder postcard will be sent.

If a household still hasn’t responded after this, census workers will begin dropping by houses to remind people to reply.

The Census Bureau will publish the first results from the 2020 census — the total population for each state — by Dec. 31 this year.

WHY REPLY?

More than \$675 billion a year in federal funding is distributed based on census data, funding which is funneled to areas such as transportation, housing, education and healthcare.

On top of funding, the data can aid cities identifying what its focus areas should be.

In the 2016 fiscal year, the George Washington Institute of Public Policy reported that Oregon received nearly \$13.5 billion through 55 federal spending programs which were informed by data derived from the 2010 census.

The census also determines how many representatives each state gets in the United States Congress.

According to Census Bureau

estimates, Oregon is among a handful of states whose population has grown significantly since the 2010 census and could therefore gain a sixth seat in the U.S. House of Representatives after the 2020 census.

At the Feb. 3 Florence City Council meeting, Henry said, “I want to encourage everybody to be involved in the census, for no other reason than I believe that we don’t always get counted, and a lot of our revenue is determined by the head count in our community.”

During the 2010 census, Oregon was estimated to have missed its opportunity to gain another seat by a count of just over 40,000 people.

“A little under 80 percent of Oregon households responded,” said Wilson. “We’re working with these jurisdictions that have low-response census tracks to target our efforts,” said Wilson. “There are a variety of methods: outreach, education, information.”

Barriers to high responses include highly mobile individuals, complex living arrangements, lack of knowledge about the census, language barriers, rapidly changing technology causing disuse of USPS mail and distrust of government.

Due to some of the personal nature of the questions, distrust is a notable barrier to responsiveness.

Questions in the 2020 census will ask participants for their name, age, address, how many people are living or staying at a home, whether the home is owned or rented, about the sex, age and

race of each person in the home and whether someone is of Hispanic, Latin or Spanish origin.

The last question has been a point of contention for many who fear the data will be used for persecution.

The Census Bureau has stated that it is asking the question for statistical purposes, which will in turn inform numerous policies such as those regarding civil rights or funding for group-specific government programs.

“ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) isn’t going to follow the Census Bureau around. That’s another rumor,” said Wilson. “Information you provide to the Census Bureau is confidential.”

PRIVACY AND SAFETY

By law, all responses to the census are kept confidential. The law states that the information collected may only be used for statistical purposes.

Still, the question of access to this data has seen its day in court.

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that address lists are protected confidential information and cannot be disclosed through legal discovery or the Freedom of Information Act. More recently, in 2010, the U.S. Justice Department determined that the Patriot Act does not overrule the legal protections of confidentiality.

Legal precedent has essentially established that no court of law can subpoena census responses.

Furthermore, the Census Bureau states that personal data cannot be used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Homeland Security nor ICE.

Though these legal protections exist, Wilson warned respondents to protect themselves from potential scams. A letter has already begun circulation, for instance, which claims to be a form for the “2020 Congressional District Census” commissioned by the Republican Party.

“It looks like a census form,” said Wilson. “But at the very bottom of that form it’s asking for a donation. No one will ever be asked to pay to respond to the census.”

Requests to respond to the census over email, phone or text message are also suspect and it is recommended that such solicitations are not given a response.

“It’s really important people respond to [the census] and they respond to the actual one,” Wilson said.

When invitations come in the mail, respondents are instructed to count everyone in the household, including infants, and can respond by phone, online or through mail.

“We just want to have everyone in our community count,” Henry said. “I encourage you to do that.”

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BEACH SAFE!

BEWARE THE SNEAKER WAVE

They’re called sneaker waves because they appear without warning, often surging high up on the beach with deadly force, and are impossible to predict. Sneaker waves also carry a large amount of sand that can saturate your clothes, weighing you down and making escape difficult if not impossible.

How to play it safe: Never turn your back on the ocean.

WATCH THOSE LOGS

The ocean is strong enough to pick up even the biggest log and plop it down on top of you. Some logs may look small, but even the tiny ones can be waterlogged and weigh tons.

How to play it safe: If you see a log in the surf or on wet sand, stay off it.

RIP CURRENTS

Rip currents are strong currents of water that rush out to sea. They are stronger than even the best swimmer. These currents can swiftly sweep unwary beachcombers and waders off their feet and out to sea. Rip currents may appear as dark, choppy water. Any time you see debris and foam floating out to sea, chances are you have found a rip current. Avoid the area.

How to play it safe: Parents keep your kids close when playing in the ocean. If caught in a rip current, **don’t panic**. Swim parallel to the beach until you are out of the current, then head for the beach.

KNOW THE TIDES

Incoming tides isolate rocks from headlands and the shore. Avoid the temptation of strolling out to an interesting rock without knowing when the tide rolls back in. Free tide tables are readily available at state park offices, information centers and many shops and motels.

How to play it safe: Stay off rocks and small, enclosed beaches.

Know when the tide is coming in by visiting the tidetable website at the Hatfield Marine Science Center <http://weather.hmsc.oregonstate.edu/weather/tides/tides.html>

HIGH WAVES CAN REACH YOU

Tides and waves can sweep over rocks, jetties and headlands, knocking you off and carrying you out to sea.

How to play it safe: Assume nothing is “high enough” and avoid exposed rocks, jetties and headlands during strong wave action (like during and after storms).

BEWARE OF HIGH, STEEP CLIFFS

Assume that all cliff edges are unstable. Wet trails or soft sand and earth can make for unstable footing. Rocks can be slippery even when it isn’t raining.

How to play it safe: Make sure you wear proper footwear, and stick to the trails. Stay behind guard fences and railings, and don’t get too close to the edge.

HEADS UP

Standing at the base of an Oceanside cliff can be dangerous, especially if it has an overhang. In some places, winter storms and high waves have eroded the shoreline, increasing the chance of collapse and slides.

How to play it safe: Beware of falling rocks, and don’t climb on bluffs and eroding hillsides. Don’t walk along the base of cliffs unless absolutely necessary.

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