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## SOCKET TECH TALK: Census safety in the digital age

The 2010 U.S. Census is underway, and in the digital age safety precautions are more important than ever. Scammers and cyber criminals looking to steal your money or identity will often use the names of reputable agencies and businesses to gain trust and acquire information for identity theft or fraudulent transactions.

“The Census is a prime opportunity for scammers to take advantage of people,” said Andy Rehak, technical support supervisor at Socket, a Missouri-based telephone and Internet provider.

### NEWS RELEASE

E-mail scams often have urgent subject lines to entice people to open requests for personal information, links to bogus Census Web sites or attachments embedded with viruses and spyware. If computer users receive e-mails from the U.S. Census Bureau asking for information or action, they should not open them or send back any sensitive data.

According to its Web site, [www.2010.census.gov](http://www.2010.census.gov), the Census Bureau will not collect data through the Web or ask for any personal information via e-mail, such as Social Security numbers, or pass-

wordss. However, survey questionnaires will be sent via e-mail to collect statistical information about social and economic conditions in the country. If a user receives a survey via e-mail and is unsure of its authenticity, he or she can contact a regional office directly to find out if it is a legitimate request.

Taking steps to protect personal information is important to avoid the stress of identity theft and potential financial damages. Rehak suggests taking precautions to stay safe online. The following tips are always useful but hold particular importance during times of heightened security risk, such as the Census.