

## **Census form is \$1,400 in your hands, county tells residents**

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by By Jennifer Shrader Staff writer

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Troup County leaders are urging residents to take part in the census - the nation's population count every 10 years - now under way.

According to the Web site 2010. census.gov, Troup County - including the cities of LaGrange, Hogansville and West Point - has about 49 percent of residents participating. Zoning administrator Scott Turk said that's slightly behind the national average of 54 percent.

"We need to step up and get going," he said Friday.

For each person who returns the form, the census means about \$1,400 brought to counties and municipalities, through grants, representation in Congress and other programs. The census numbers are used by companies to locate industries in an area, as well as retail shops. The population numbers are used to determine congressional and state legislators' district sizes.

"If you throw it away, you're really throwing away \$1,400," Turk said.

And residents can look forward to an in-person visit from a census taker, when they begin to count the stragglers, on May 1.

Hogansville made a similar push for residents to participate in the census, prior to the forms being mailed out in mid-March, for the same reasons the county cited.

"I believe we were undercounted the last time," Mayor Jimmy Jackson said.

Redistricting decisions are made about two years after the numbers are collected.

Turk, county planner Nancy Seeger and County Commission Chairman Ricky Wolfe said residents should not worry about census takers misusing private information.

"The information collected isn't going anywhere," Seeger said.

There's a steep fine and even a prison term for census workers who leak even the basic information that's collected.

"When you think about it, most of your information is public anyway if you have a credit card," Wolfe said jokingly.

— A second round of census forms went out this week to those residents who didn't get theirs in mid-March. Seeger said residents of new developments built in the last 10

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years are likely to be missed and census forms are not mailed to those with a post office box for an address. Residents who haven't received a census form by April 12 were asked request one by calling 866-872-6868 toll-free.

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