

Mecca Residents Show Mix Of Fear And Hope For 2010 Census

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MECCA - Community leaders in Thermal and Mecca are trying hard to convince people living there to be counted in this year's census. Counting everyone, including undocumented workers and illegal immigrants, determines federal funding for years to come.

The census is coming this April and it's time to get counted. But many residents of Mecca and Thermal, are already suspicious of people working for the government asking questions. A large portion of people here are undocumented workers or illegal immigrants. Census workers and local political leaders are thinking of ways to bring people's fears down.

Census worker Virginia Ortega says, "Some of the Latino population is a little afraid but the reality is, when we explore the benefits of doing the census, they understand."

County Supervisor John Benoit tells us in English and Spanish, "We're very concerned that we get a good census count. That's going to drive all kinds of funding decisions at the Federal level for the next decade."

But will people living in Mecca and Thermal take kindly to people walking around with clipboards asking them census questions? We hit the streets and asked some people in Spanish whether they'll stand up and get counted.

The first person we talked to says "We don't know anything about it. I'm not afraid, because I'm not going to do it."

One man answers, "They're going to do the census here. If they don't count us, then what?"

Another day laborer replies, "the Census is very necessary. We have to be counted so that we can more likely get help from the Federal government."

His friend near the De Leon market says, "with employment the way it is, it's

very difficult. It's needed... Help with everything, so there can be good in this country."

Business owner Naomi Delgado of De La Cruz Hair Salon in Mecca agrees, "It's very important. I feel because there's a lot of need. Especially for the migrant community to see who is here and who is not and to be part of the community, to be involved in it.

To find out more about the 2010 Census, go to <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>