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Tax season in final weeks: what to know before and after filing

MADISON – The **April 18** individual income tax filing deadline is one month away.

Taxpayers who already filed and are receiving a refund may track their refund's status on the Where's My Refund page of the Wisconsin Department of Revenue's (DOR) website at revenue.wi.gov.

Those yet to pay must file by the April 18 deadline, and anyone owing money needs to file and pay by the deadline to avoid interest and fees. Anyone unable to pay in full should pay what they can by April 18 and request a payment plan.

The Department of Revenue encourages electronic filing as it is the fastest, most accurate and secure way to file a tax return.

"Filing electronically is a way we can work together to prevent tax fraud and identity theft," says DOR Secretary Peter Barca.

As DOR continues to improve its fraud prevention measures to combat new and changing scams, the agency encourages taxpayers to do their part by protecting their personal information. Here are several ways taxpayers can protect themselves.

Use Identity Protection (IP) PINs

Taxpayers should consider signing up for the federal IP PIN at irs.gov and Wisconsin IP PIN at revenue.wi.gov. Both IP PINs help prevent unauthorized persons from using taxpayer personal information to fraudulently file federal and state returns in their names.

Be alert

Know that DOR will never call, email or text message anyone without first sending them a letter either through the mail or registered My Tax Account. A call, email or message received without having first received a letter from DOR is a red flag for a phishing scam or other fraud.

Be proactive

- Keep firewall, malware and anti-virus software up to date.
- Encrypt tax and other sensitive records stored on electronic devices.
- Use strong and unique passwords for online tax preparation accounts.
- Use two-factor authentication.
- Never send tax information through unencrypted email or a public Wi-Fi connection.
- Choose reputable tax preparers.
- File electronically.

Help is here

Free tax services through Wisconsin's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs are offered to low- to moderate-income individuals, older adults, persons with disabilities, limited English speakers and military members. Search VITA on the DOR website for details on these programs and to find the closest VITA or TCE site.

Hours will be extended in DOR's Customer Service Call Center until 5:45 p.m. on April 5, 7, 12 and 14. Taxpayers may also find answers to their tax questions on DOR's Individuals page at revenue.wi.gov. Visit the Contact Us page on the DOR website or call (608) 266-2486.

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