



## News Release

Media Relations Office

Washington, D.C.

Media Contact: 202.622.4000

[www.IRS.gov/newsroom](http://www.IRS.gov/newsroom)

Public Contact: 800.829.1040

**E-file, IRS.gov Help Avoid Problems at Tax Time**

IR-2004-37, March 17, 2004

WASHINGTON — With nearly half of this year's tax returns filed, the Internal Revenue Service has already seen the number of electronically filed tax returns pass the 40 million mark. The number of e-filed returns is nearly 11 percent ahead of last year's pace, according to new statistics released today.

"More and more taxpayers are discovering e-filing is the fastest, easiest way to do their taxes," said IRS Commissioner Mark W. Everson. "E-filers get their refunds in half the time of people filing a paper return."

Through March 12, 40.2 million returns were e-filed. Of those, more than 9.2 million were self-prepared on a home computer, which reflects a 23 percent increase.

E-filing and electronic services offered on IRS.gov are seeing big increases this year. The IRS encourages taxpayers to use these services and follow other simple steps to help make tax time easier:

**File Returns Electronically.** IRS e-file is the fastest and most accurate way to file a tax return. If a taxpayer is due a refund, the waiting time for e-filers is half that of paper filers. Some taxpayers may qualify for the Free File service accessed through IRS.gov.

**Visit the IRS Online.** The IRS Web site, IRS.gov, had more than 4.5 billion hits in 2003. Anyone with Internet access can download tax forms, instructions and publications as well as tax law information and answers to frequently-asked tax questions. *1040 Central*, a special section of IRS.gov, offers information specifically tailored to individual filers.

**Use *Where's My Refund?*** If a taxpayer wants to know whether his or her refund has been processed or when the refund will be mailed or directly deposited, "Where's My Refund?" has the answers. So far this filing season, taxpayers have used this free service 13.2 million times. That's up 5 million from last year. "Where's My Refund?" is available on IRS.gov.

**Check the Child Tax Credit.** Taxpayers who claim the Child Tax Credit this year must remember to reduce it by the amount of the advance Child Tax Credit payment received in 2003. Through March 15, taxpayers have made 8.1 million visits to IRS.gov to double-check the advance payment amounts they received last year.

**Have Refunds Deposited Directly.** Another way to speed up a refund and reduce the chance of theft is to choose direct deposit. Taxpayers should check the tax instructions for details on entering the routing and account numbers on their tax returns and make sure the numbers are correct. Wrong numbers can cause refunds to be misdirected or delayed. Direct deposits are up more than 10 percent so far this year.

**Organize Tax Records.** Tax preparation time can be significantly reduced for taxpayers who develop a system for organizing their records and receipts. Start with the income, deduction or tax credit items that were on last year's return.

**Take Advantage of Free Assistance.** The IRS offers recorded messages on about 150 tax topics through its toll-free TeleTax service at 1-800-829-4477. It also offers federal tax forms and publications at 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676). Some libraries, post offices, banks, grocery stores, copy centers and office supply stores carry the most widely requested forms and instructions. Libraries may also have reference sets of IRS publications.

**Double-Check Math and Data Entries.** Taxpayers must review returns for possible math errors and make sure they have provided the names and correct (and legibly written) Social Security or other identification numbers for themselves, their spouses and their dependents.

**Don't Procrastinate.** Taxpayers should resist the temptation to put off doing taxes until the last minute. Hurrying to meet the filing deadline may cause a taxpayer to overlook potential tax savings and will likely increase the risk of error.

## 2004 FILING SEASON STATISTICS

Cumulative through the week ending 3/14/03 and 3/12/04

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<b>Individual Income Tax Returns</b>			
Total Receipts	60,721,000	62,038,000	2.2
Total Processed	54,453,000	56,793,000	4.3
<b>E-filing Receipts:</b>			
TOTAL	36,322,000	40,228,000	10.8
TeleFile (phone)	3,060,000	2,852,000	- 6.8
Computer	33,262,000	37,376,000	12.4
Tax Professionals	25,740,000	28,135,000	9.3
Self-prepared	7,522,000	9,241,000	22.9
<b>Tax Year 2003 Refunds Certified:</b>			
Number	49,515,000	51,945,000	4.9
Amount of principal	\$ 101.511 billion	\$ 111.728 billion	10.1
Average refund	\$2,050	\$2,151	4.9
<b>Direct Deposit Refunds:</b>			
Number	30,598,000	33,688,000	10.1
Amount	\$ 73.812 billion	\$ 83.862 billion	13.6
Average	\$2,412	\$2,489	3.2