

Montana *Tax News You Can Use*

Montana Department of Revenue

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In This Issue

Property Tax Relief and Reporting Deadlines for Property Owners

MW-3s, RW-3s, W-2s, Most 1099s Tax Deadlines Approaching

Where's My Refund?

Refunds and Identity Verification Letters

Tax Professionals Warned of New Scam to "Unlock" Their Tax Software Accounts

Tax Facts

Approved Tax Software

Administrative Rule Activity

An e-newsletter for tax preparers and those interested in the state's tax system.

Property Tax Relief and Reporting Deadlines for Property Owners

We'd like to remind owners of real and personal property and livestock about important deadlines approaching soon.

March 1 deadlines:

- Livestock owners must complete and return a **livestock reporting form** to the department either online at ReportYourLivestock.mt.gov or in the mail.
- For **nonprofit, religious, or charitable organizations** to be considered for property tax exemption for 2017.
- Reporting **class eight business equipment**, which can be done online through TransAction Portal (TAP) at <https://tap.dor.mt.gov/> or by paper form.

April 15 deadlines:

- The **Property Tax Assistance Program (PTAP)** provides property tax relief to anyone who meets the ownership, occupancy, and income qualifications and there is no age restriction.
- The **Montana Disabled Veteran (MDV)** exemption provides property tax assistance to qualifying 100% disabled veterans and their surviving spouses.
- The **Elderly Homeowner/Renter Tax Credit (2EC)** is a refundable income tax credit of up to \$1,000 available to taxpayers based on household income and is for anyone age 62 or older as of December 31, 2016.

For applications and forms, go online to revenue.mt.gov/property-forms or contact your **local Department of Revenue office**. **For questions and more information about qualifications**, visit revenue.mt.gov/property-assessment or phone the department's call center at 1-866-859-2254, or 444-6900 if calling in Helena.

MW-3s, RW-3s, W-2s, Most 1099s Tax Deadlines Approaching

February 28 is the filing deadline for all MW-3s, RW-3s, W-2s, and most 1099s.
March 1 is the deadline for:

- Filing quarterly retail telecommunications excise tax returns ([Form RTE](#))

March 15 is the deadline for filing:

- [Form CLT-4S](#), S Corporation Information and Composite Tax Return
- [Form DER-1](#) for disregarded entities owned by S corporations

Where's My Refund?

As income tax return filing season continues, we would like to remind taxpayers about the advantages of filing electronically and about expectations for refund timelines. You can receive your tax refund sooner if you file your taxes electronically.

Because of the ongoing nationwide increase in identity theft and filing of fraudulent returns, the department takes times to review returns to make sure they are valid. This means that the department cannot always give you a timeframe for how long it will take to issue your refund.

TAP (TransAction Portal) will show you the status of your return and refund. The status of your refund depends on where your return is in the process.

Refunds could seem slow or be delayed because:

- In response to security measures in place to protect from identify theft, we may have sent taxpayers an identity verification letter (*see next article*). Refunds cannot be processed until the steps included in the letter are completed.
- Returns have line item or calculation errors to be reviewed.
- Refunds may have been offset to pay another state debt. Taxpayers will receive a letter if this happens.
- Taxpayer is considered to be a first-time filer. A first-time filer is defined as a taxpayer who has not filed a Montana tax return as a primary or secondary taxpayer in previous years.

Be sure the same information is used from current year's tax return:

- Social Security Number
- Refund Amount

Refund amounts can be found on:

- Line 74 of Form 2
- Line 21 of Form 2EZ
- Line 13 of Form 2EC

Where's My Refund has up-to-date information available about refunds. Information is updated overnight, Monday through Friday, so there is no need to check more than once a day. The information in Where's My Refund is similar information available to our phone representatives when you call.

If it has been more than eight weeks, our representatives may have additional information. Call us toll free at **(866) 859-2254** (in Helena **(406) 444-6900**) between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Refunds and Identity Verification Letters

The Montana Department of Revenue is actively reviewing tax returns to prevent someone from stealing another taxpayer's identity and tax refund. Due to the nationwide increase in filing of false returns, we implemented additional security measures to protect taxpayers from this type of identity fraud. One measure involves mailing an identity verification letter that asks the taxpayer to go online to our TransAction Portal ([TAP](#)) and verify that they or their preparer filed a Montana individual income tax return.

The letter includes a tax verification code and asks the taxpayer to go to [TAP](#) and complete the necessary steps before we can release their refund. If a taxpayer doesn't have internet access, the letter includes information about submitting documentation to us to confirm their identity.

We appreciate your cooperation and patience as we attempt to reduce fraudulent tax return filings. We are concerned about the delay taxpayers are experiencing before receiving their refunds and are working hard to get the refunds paid as quickly as possible, while also doing everything we can to protect identities and refunds.

Security Summit Alert: Tax Professionals Warned of New Scam to "Unlock" Their Tax Software Accounts

WASHINGTON - The Internal Revenue Service, state tax agencies and the tax industry today warned tax professionals to be alert of a new phishing email scam impersonating software providers.

The scam email comes with the subject line, "Access Locked." It tells recipients that access to their tax prep software accounts has been "suspended due to errors in your security details." The scam email asks the tax professional to address the issue by using an "unlock" link provided in the email.

However, the link will take the tax professional to a fake web page, where they are asked to enter their user name and password. Instead of unlocking accounts, the tax professionals actually are inadvertently providing their information to cybercriminals who use the stolen credentials to access the preparers' accounts and to steal client information.

The Security Summit partners, which includes the IRS, state tax agencies and the nation's tax community, remind tax professionals and taxpayers to never open a link or an attachment from a suspicious email. These scams can increase during tax season. Tax professionals can review additional tips to protect clients and themselves at the Security Summit's awareness campaign, [Protect Your Clients, Protect Yourself](#), on [IRS.gov](#).

Tax Facts

For 2017, as of February 17:

- Total number of individual income tax returns we've processed: 117,983
- Number of individual tax returns we've received electronically: 115,120

- Number of individual income tax refunds we've issued: 38,260
- Average amount of refunds: \$453.57

Approved Tax Software for Tax Year 2016

Every year, tax software vendors seek approval to participate in the Montana federal/state electronic filing program. We test the software of each vendor to ensure that it's compatible with our electronic filing system.

You can find the latest approval status of each product on the department's website under [Online Services > Tax Software](#).

Administrative Rule Activity

Go to revenue.mt.gov/rules for information about the department's current rulemaking activity, public hearing dates, and to sign up to receive future notices by email.

Contact MT DOR

Web: Revenue.mt.gov
Email: DORCustomerAssistance@mt.gov
Toll Free: 1-866-859-2254
Helena: (406) 444-6900



Tax News You Can Use: DORWritingProject@mt.gov
We welcome your suggestions for articles, as well as your questions and comments.

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Montana Tax News You Can Use is published weekly during tax season and periodically at other times. It is for anyone who helps people file taxes and meet their tax responsibility and for anyone interested in the state's tax system. It keeps you posted on what's happening at the department, lets you know about new ways of preparing and filing taxes, and brings you up-to-date on some of the issues and trends popping up during tax season in Montana.

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