

Media Releases 2009

Update on Tax Season 2009

Pretoria, 16 September 2009 – The South African Revenue Service (SARS) has received more than 1.5 million tax returns since the filing period for Tax Season 2009 opened on 1 July this year.

This represents a 52.64% increase in the number of returns submitted for the same period last year – the first 11 weeks of the 2008 Tax Season. By this time last year SARS had received 959 000 returns. There has been an encouraging trend this year of taxpayers submitting their returns far earlier during the filing period than in previous years.

SARS conducted research at the end of July, after the first month of Tax Season 2009, to try and understand the shift in behavioural trends.

Research indicated that the increase in people filing earlier was motivated by two main factors: the possibility of qualifying for a tax rebate – particularly in the current economic climate – and the desire to get the filing requirement out of the way.

Most of the taxpayers partaking in the survey said the ease of submitting tax returns was also a key motivating factor in their decision to submit early and many viewed eFiling more favourably (easier/much easier) in this tax season than in previous years.

The majority of tax returns that are submitted electronically via eFiling are receiving refunds in their bank accounts within an average of 48 hours after submitting the return. These are instances where the return is accurately completed and where the employer has provided the correct IRP5 information to SARS. So far 95% of returns have been assessed within one day, compared to 60% in the same period last year.

eFiling continues to grow impressively. Since 1 July 2009 more than 830 000 taxpayers have already used the internet to submit their returns and it is anticipated that the number of registered eFiling users will increase to over 2.5 million. For the same period last year 479 000 taxpayers had submitted using eFiling.

SARS branch offices are also capturing returns electronically on behalf of taxpayers. So far more than 640 000 people have already filed their returns electronically with the help of agents at branches, compared to 426 000 for the same period last year.

This means that close to 98% of all returns have been submitted electronically to date with manual returns (those completed on paper and submitted via post or drop-off) decreasing sharply to 71 000 this year compared to 151 000 for the same period last year.

Regarding deadlines, SARS wants to reiterate the following—

- The deadline for manual submission – the paper version of the return either by post or drop off boxes – is 18 September 2009. **The deadline will not be extended – not because of last week's industrial action or for any other reason**
- The deadline for electronic submissions – eFiling or at branches— is 20 November 2009
- Taxpayers who cannot submit the manual return by Friday this week, can approach any SARS branch offices at any time before 20 November 2009
- SARS will capture the return electronically on behalf of the taxpayer and the taxpayer WILL NOT be liable for penalties for late submission
- There is still about 2 months left for taxpayers to submit their returns to SARS and there is no compelling need at this stage to extend any deadline

Given the large numbers of taxpayers at SARS offices this week, SARS will extend its office hours from 08am to 6pm daily.