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THE TAX LAWYER

Mar. 22 2011 – 8:15 am

Hey IRS, Where's My Tax Package?

If you're like me, you didn't exactly look forward to a bulky IRS form booklet hitting your mailbox. Still, it was an annual rite of passage, sort of like old fashioned telephone books. And it told you when to start compiling your records or at least worrying about them.

Plus, there's just something so tactile about the whole experience, especially if you fished out the pre-printed and sticky-backed label for your return. Remember the IRS warning that if you didn't use your very own sticky label, it could cause a delay? That personalized label *meant* something.

But if you've been wondering how come your tax return form booklet is so late this year, stop wondering. The [IRS skipped the paper packets](#) entirely this filing season, one not-so-subtle hint that e-filing is the new normal. Clearly, e-filing [saves](#) the IRS money.

Besides, IRS officials have admitted that increased information available electronically could improve the effectiveness of IRS's compliance programs and bring in additional enforcement revenue. For that and other reasons, I've been reluctant to embrace e-filing the way most tax professionals have. I've seen more mistakes with e-filed returns than paper filed ones.

I've even seen returns filed that—it later develops—weren't ready. Elections can be made on filing a return that, because the return is filed, cannot be undone on an amended return. Haven't we all hit "send" on something that we wished we hadn't? It is harder and takes more

volition to sign something, photocopy it, put it in an envelope and mail it. See [Ten Ways To Audit Proof Your Return](#).

Still, most people say errors are much *less* likely with e-filing, and there are many advantages, including speedier refunds. Besides, like it or not, paper has gone the way of the dodo. [The Worker, Homeownership, and Business Assistance Act of 2009](#) requires return preparers expecting to file 10 or more individual, estate, or trust returns after 2010 to file electronically.

But under the IRS's phase-in plan, for 2011, a return preparer must file electronically if he expects to file 100 or more individual returns during 2011. That applies in the aggregate for a preparer who is a member of a firm that reasonably expects to file that many. It's still possible in some cases to file on paper by having your preparer give *you* your return for filing. [Notice 2010-85](#) provides guidance what to do.

But be careful. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) [report](#) notes that 15 out of 22 states with e-filing requirements for preparers use either the word "prepare" alone, or "prepare *or* file," in their requirements. In fact, GAO says Congress may amend the tax code to make it clear you can't avoid e-filing by having your preparer give you back your return to file on paper.

Some filers still need to file on paper, such as those making a noncash charitable contribution and filing [Form 8283](#).

For more see:

[What's New for Tax Season](#)

[Don't Miss The IRS Website](#)

[E-Filing And The IRS Website](#)

[Paper Or E-File Your IRS Return](#)

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