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State Web site promises better tax answers

Service offers more options for finding info, tracking refunds

By David Collins

New Mexico taxpayers now have another official place they can go to deal with their taxes on the Internet. The question is which state Taxation and Revenue Department Web site is the right place to go.

State tax officials on Friday demonstrated to journalists a new Web service where taxpayers can sign up to learn about their state taxes.

Dubbed TAP, for Tax Access Point, the site provides information about when refunds are due, allows businesses to file change-of-address notices and lets taxpayers review returns from past years.

“TAP will significantly reduce the time for taxpayers to get answers to their questions,” said Taxation and Revenue Secretary Jan Goodwin.

The department is getting about 300 calls daily from people wanting to know when their refund will arrive, and tax officials expect the number to more than triple as the tax season wears on, said Marlin Mackey, the department’s chief information officer.

Now, taxpayers can log on to the new state site using their Social Security number and the amount of their expected refund to find out when the check will be in the mail.

But it’s not the same site they use to file tax returns online.

“If you want to just check status of everything, go to TAP. Otherwise, it is just for information purposes,” Mackey said.

The new site lets taxpayers retrieve their individual or business tax information, whereas existing interactive services on the department’s Web sites primarily let people submit information, such as tax filings. Both sites include opportunities to send an electronic payment.

The advantage of the new site is that taxpayers can retrieve information at once about several tax accounts under their name. For that, Mackey said, the department wanted a higher level of security than it has on the sites launched in recent years to allow electronic state-tax filings.

Taxpayers can file information for 13 of 26 state tax programs online. The department plans to add access to more of those programs at the new account-information site in coming months, Mackey said.

The new service is part of an effort to move much of the state tax-filing process to electronic networks. State tax officials launched a personal income- tax filing site about four years ago and a combined- business-tax filing site more recently.

Taxation and Revenue Department spokesman David Harrell said the department does not include enough information in its mailings to let identity thieves steal taxpayer information from the mail and use it to log on to the new site.

Mackey said the department is trying to move tax reporting onto the Internet because it is faster and results in fewer errors than paper filings.

While the department is providing increased access for individuals to information about their tax status, it has no plans to put public records about oil-and-gas-tax payments or public motor vehicle records on the Internet.

In 2004, the Taxation and Revenue Department persuaded a state appeals court it could legally charge royalties for use of those public records in electronic formats. In 2005, the state Legislature required counties to provide complete electronic copies of public data sets, including county property tax data, but did not require state agencies to provide electronic access to their public records at cost.

Goodwin said Friday the department does not foresee releasing public oil-and-gas tax records in an easily accessible format. “It’s something we are constantly looking at, though,” she said.

Links to tax filing sites and to the new site are available at www.tax.state.nm.us. The taxpayer account information site is at <https://tap.state.nm.us>.