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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service announced that the nation's tax season will start on Friday, Feb. 12, 2021, when the tax agency will begin accepting and processing 2020 tax year returns.

The Feb. 12 start date for individual tax return filers allows the IRS time to do additional programming and testing of IRS systems following the Dec. 27 tax law changes that provided a second round of Economic Impact Payments and other benefits.

This programming work is critical to ensuring IRS systems run smoothly. If filing season were opened without the correct programming in place, then there could be a delay in issuing refunds to taxpayers. These changes ensure that eligible people will receive any remaining stimulus money as a Recovery Rebate Credit when they file their 2020 tax return.

To speed refunds during the pandemic, the IRS urges taxpayers to file electronically with direct deposit as soon as they have the information they need. People can begin filing their tax returns immediately with tax software companies, including IRS Free File partners. These groups are starting to accept tax returns now, and the returns will be transmitted to the IRS starting Feb. 12.

“Planning for the nation’s filing season process is a massive undertaking, and IRS teams have been working non-stop to prepare for this as well as delivering Economic Impact Payments in record time,” said IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig. “Given the pandemic, this is one of the nation’s most important filing seasons ever. This start date will ensure that people get their needed tax refunds quickly while also making sure they receive

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any remaining stimulus payments they are eligible for as quickly as possible.”

Last year’s average tax refund was more than \$2,500. More than 150 million tax returns are expected to be filed this year, with the vast majority before the Thursday, April 15 deadline.

Under the PATH Act, the IRS cannot issue a refund involving the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) or Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC) before mid-February. The law provides this additional time to help the IRS stop fraudulent refunds and claims from being issued, including to identity thieves.

The IRS anticipates a first week of March refund for many EITC and ACTC taxpayers if they file electronically with direct deposit and there are no issues with their tax returns. This would be the same experience for taxpayers if the filing season opened in late January. Taxpayers will need to check Where’s My Refund for their personalized refund date.

Overall, the IRS anticipates nine out of 10 taxpayers will receive their refund within 21 days of when they file electronically with direct deposit if there are no issues with their tax return. The IRS urges taxpayers and tax professionals to file electronically. To avoid delays in processing, people should avoid filing paper returns wherever possible.

### Tips for taxpayers to make filing easier

To speed refunds and help with their tax filing, the IRS urges people to follow these simple steps:

- File electronically and use direct deposit for the quickest refunds.
- Check IRS.gov for the latest tax information, including the latest on Economic Impact Payments. There is no need to call.
- For those who may be eligible for stimulus payments, they should carefully review the guidelines for the Recovery Rebate Credit. Most people received Economic Impact Payments automatically, and anyone who received the maximum amount does not need to include any information about their payments when they file. However, those who didn’t receive a payment or only received a partial payment may be eligible to claim the Recovery Rebate Credit when they file their 2020 tax return. Tax preparation software, including IRS Free File, will help taxpayers figure the amount.
- Remember, advance stimulus payments received separately are not taxable, and they do not reduce the taxpayer’s refund when they file in 2021.