

 Fact Sheet

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IRS Offers Filing Season Assistance to Hurricane Victims

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Many taxpayers who were affected by hurricanes Katrina, Rita or Wilma face special challenges this filing season.

These challenges may include retrieving copies of prior year tax returns or learning how to claim a casualty loss on a 2005 tax return. Whatever the issue, the Internal Revenue Service offers a number of channels of assistance to hurricane victims.

For hurricane victims who need help with tax matters, the IRS has a dedicated toll free number to call, 1-866-562-5227. This is a one-stop shop offering help on multiple issues that arise for disaster victims.

Similarly, the IRS Web site, IRS.gov, features a special section with details on the new tax laws and resources for hurricane victims, including answers to frequently asked questions. On IRS.gov, search for "Tax Relief in Disaster Situations." Taxpayers can also use the Web site to find Publication 4492, "Information for Taxpayers Affected by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma," which will be available in late January.

Free volunteer return preparation assistance is available for low- to moderate-income individuals through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs. Call 1-800-829-1040 to find a location near you.

Finally, help with return preparation or other basic tax services is available free or at low cost through disaster relief agreements with the tax professional community, and IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers can also provide help with tax matters to hurricane victims. A list of sites around the country is available at <http://www.irs.gov/localcontacts/>.

Hurricane victims who have not been able to secure help through other channels may call the Taxpayer Advocate Service at 1-877-777-4778.

For people interested in helping Hurricane Katrina victims, the IRS reminds taxpayers about a leave donation program it has established with employers. The leave donation program allows employees to help Katrina victims without having to make a cash donation. Taxpayers should check with their employers for more information.