

IRS**News Release****Media Relations Office****Washington, D.C.****Tel. 202.622.4000****For Release: 4/24/03****Release No: IR-2003-56****FREE FILE AND IRS E-FILE AVAILABLE THROUGH OCT. 15**

WASHINGTON – The Internal Revenue Service reminded taxpayers today that Free File, the tax preparation and electronic filing service, remains available for people who received filing extensions. More than 2.7 million taxpayers used Free File during the regular filing season.

A projected 8.5 million taxpayers were expected to request the automatic four-month extension, which would extend their filing deadline until Aug. 15. Those taxpayers with hardship situations can request a second extension for an Oct. 15 deadline.

IRS e-file will be available through Oct. 15. Several Free File members also will continue providing free preparation and e-filing services to eligible taxpayers through Oct. 15. Late filers who failed to get an extension also should use Free File and e-file to help reduce the time penalties are applied.

“We urge taxpayers who have yet to file returns to give Free File a try,” said Bob Wenzel, acting IRS commissioner. “We are extremely pleased that so many taxpayers have embraced the new initiative. The 2.7 million users easily surpassed our expectations.”

Free File debuted Jan. 16 as a public-private partnership between the IRS and the Free File Alliance, a consortium of tax preparation software companies. Each company sets its own criteria for taxpayer eligibility, generally based on income, age or state residency. Eligible taxpayers were able to prepare and e-file their federal tax returns for free.

Free File is accessible through www.irs.gov. More than 8.3 million computer users visited the Free File content area through April 15, making it the most visited page on the heavily used IRS Web site.

The final statistical report on the 2003 filing season is expected to be issued next week.

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