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## 2021 Tax Filing Tips from ALDOR

*Alabama Department of Revenue Will Begin Accepting Returns on Feb. 12*

MONTGOMERY, Feb. 5, 2021 – Are you ready to file your income tax return? Tax Season 2021 begins on Friday, Feb. 12, and the filing deadline is April 15. The Alabama Department of Revenue (ALDOR) has a few tips and suggestions to help you file your return safely and get your refund as quickly as possible:

### *Security*

- **FILE EARLY** – As soon as a taxpayers receive their W-2s, 1099s and other documents, they should file as soon as possible. Filing early can help ALDOR get refunds approved earlier, plus it enables taxpayers to get ahead of ID thieves.
- **SAFETY FIRST** – ALDOR plays an important role in preventing state revenue and taxpayer money from ending up in the wrong hands. Fraud detection reviews, accuracy checks, and matching against employer W2s does require a little extra time, but it helps ensure that taxpayers get their money rather than fraudsters.
- **EMPLOYERS – FILE THOSE W-2s!** Employers must file employee W-2 information with ALDOR by **Jan. 31**. Employers who file late may face penalties and will slow the processing of their employees' tax returns.
- **TAKE A SELFIE TO GET YOUR REFUND SOONER** – Want to speed up your refund AND protect your identity? Then download the IDEMIA eID app and follow the guided process in the app to enroll. Your photo and driver's license data will be authenticated by the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency to verify your identity. With the eID verified, you can go to My Alabama Taxes ([www.myalabamataxes.alabama.gov](http://www.myalabamataxes.alabama.gov)) and click on "Register My IDEMIA eID" under "Quick links for individuals" to register your eID and enroll in the "Opt-In" program. This program will notify you when a return is filed with ALDOR using your information by sending a notification through your eID app. The app will allow you to securely verify that you did file the return or decline the transaction because you did not file the return. **BONUS** – your eID-verified return will be processed more quickly! The IDEMIA eID app is free and available in both the App Store and Google Play.
- **LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH** – After returns are filed, ALDOR may send letters asking for more information. If a taxpayer receives a letter from ALDOR, they should respond quickly so the department can review their information and get their refund to them as soon as possible. **REMEMBER!!!** – The Alabama Department of Revenue will NEVER contact taxpayers initially by phone, text or email, only by letters sent through the mail. Beware of scams – **DO NOT GIVE ANYONE YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION WITHOUT CONFIRMING THEY ARE THE PROPER AUTHORITIES!**
  - **Fraud Detection.** To detect and combat tax identity theft, ALDOR uses a variety of methods to validate identities and tax returns. To help protect personally identifiable information and keep dollars from going to criminals, the department may send:
    - An Identity Confirmation letter that asks the taxpayer to take a short online quiz or provide copies of documents to verify their identity (<http://revenue.alabama.gov/idquiz/>)
    - A return verification letter that asks the taxpayer to verify online whether they or their representative filed the tax return ALDOR received
  - **Accuracy Checks.** ALDOR stops and reviews about 3% to 5% of individual income tax returns each year to resolve mathematical errors or request missing information. To be sure that tax returns correctly reflect information and intent, ALDOR may send:
    - A Request for Information letter that asks for missing or additional information to support data reported on the tax return
    - A Tax Computation Change letter that provides an explanation of changes that were made to the tax return

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## *Refunds*

- **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?** The date a return is filed and how the return is filed largely determines when the refund can be issued. For example, electronically filed returns are received and processed significantly faster than returns that are mailed to ALDOR. Also, if an error-free return is mailed in January or February, the taxpayer can expect to receive their refund sooner than if the return is filed in March or April. Generally, about 30% of income tax returns are filed between April 1 and April 30. Returns filed this close to the deadline may require as many as 90 days to process.
  - **First-time filers:** It will take additional time for new filers to be validated and entered into ALDOR's system. Until that time, the Refund Status website won't recognize these taxpayers and will report their returns as "not entered in system." It will take approximately 10 -12 weeks to process a first-time filer's return.
  - **E-filers:** Generally, e-filers can expect their refund about 8-10 weeks after the date they receive their filing acknowledgement from the state.
  - **Paper filers:** The return will take about 8-12 weeks to process. ALDOR personnel must manually enter information from paper returns into the database.
  - If the taxpayer received a letter from ALDOR asking for more information or to verify identity, the refund will be delayed until the requested information is received and reviewed by the department.
- **WHERE'S YOUR REFUND?** ALDOR will begin releasing 2020 income tax refunds on March 1, 2021. This will allow time to properly vet and process the returns of early filers, confirm the accuracy of legitimate returns, and filter out fraudulent returns. The best way to track the progress of refunds is My Alabama Taxes ([www.myalabamataxes.alabama.gov](http://www.myalabamataxes.alabama.gov)). It's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Those taxpayers who don't have internet access can track their refund progress by calling the automated refund system toll-free at 1-855-894-7391 or ALDOR's call center at 1-800-535-9410.
- **FILE FOR FREE** – Taxpayers can file state returns for free using My Alabama Taxes. Filing returns on MAT requires taxpayers to sign up for a MAT username to access their income tax account, file their returns and make payments. Sign up for MAT at [www.myalabamataxes.alabama.gov](http://www.myalabamataxes.alabama.gov).

For more information about Individual Income Tax, visit <https://revenue.alabama.gov/individual-corporate/>.

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