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IRS Sending Out Millions of Alerts

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WASHINGTON — Don't be alarmed. More than 130 million households will get letters from the Internal Revenue Service beginning next week and the news is good.

The letters are part of an effort to ensure people do not miss out if they are eligible for a tax rebate check under the recently passed \$168 billion economic aide plan.

The IRS is reminding people to file a 2007 tax return so they will receive the payment.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said his department and the IRS would work hard to get the word out. "For the majority of Americans, all they will need to do is file a tax return," Paulson said in a statement.

He said the IRS would work with the Veterans Affairs Department, the Social Security Administration and private groups such as AARP to "reach those who do not normally file a return and ensure they know how to get their stimulus payment this year."

The letters carry the headline "Economic Stimulus Payment Notice" and begin "Dear Taxpayer." They say the IRS is pleased to inform the recipient that Congress passed and President Bush signed into law a plan that will provide payments to more than 130 million households.

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said the IRS should focus "its time, energy and money" figuring out how to speed up the mailing of the checks. They are scheduled to go out starting in May.

The mailing that people will get next week tells them they may qualify for a one-time payment of up to \$600 for individuals or \$1,200 for a married couple filing jointly; there are additional payments of \$300 for each qualifying child younger than 17.

"The IRS will figure eligibility, figure the amount and send the payment," the letter says. "This payment should not be confused with any 2007 income tax refund that is owed to you by the federal government."

The 2007 refunds will be made separately from the upcoming payments, the IRS says.

The IRS notices do not seek any financial information and will go to people who filed a tax return last year.

A separate mailing planned by the IRS for late March will go to certain recipients of Social Security and VA benefits. These benefits are generally nontaxable and recipients do not file tax returns.

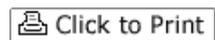
In order to get a payment, people in this group will need to file a tax return if they received at least \$3,000 from a combination of certain Social Security benefits, veterans benefits and earned income. The minimum payment for this group will be \$300 for an individual and \$600 for a couple filing jointly.

The IRS has created a sample Form 1040A with information on how to fill out the lines necessary to enable eligible people who do not normally file a tax return to receive the stimulus payment. Details on eligibility, payment amounts and requirements can be found at <http://www.irs.gov> which is the agency's Web site.

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