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Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2004 11:48 AM
To: efast2@dol.gov
Subject: 5500EZ form filing problems

I am the owner of a one-participant retirement plan and file my own 5500EZ forms annually. I've done this for many years without a hitch until this year when the forms never arrived, which they usually do months in advance of the filing deadline a couple of weeks from now.

At first I thought I'd simply misplaced them since I reorganized the office recently. But after searching fruitlessly for them for days, I called the IRS just before the end of June to find out whether I could pick up the forms somewhere in Los Angeles, where I live and work. Much to my surprise I was told that the forms had never been sent out at all this year because of a change in procedure! The IRS worker did not know why the procedure was changed and told me that postcards were supposed to have been sent to all of the filers to inform us of this change in process, but I was one of many filers who had not received any notice and was calling in during the last week of June to find out how to get forms. The person told me they probably did not have the forms at the local (L.A.) IRS office but that he would send them to me that day. He was very reassuring and implied that he had the forms right in his office and would place them in the mail that very day. I asked where he was located and he was not far from Los Angeles, so we figured I would receive the forms within 6 - 8 days. They never arrived.

Yesterday, having waited a full two weeks for the forms to arrive, I called again in mild panic and was told by another IRS worker that she could not mail me the forms directly that day because she was simply in a Call Center and would have to ORDER the forms to be sent to me. She said I should allow another two weeks for the order to reach someone who could mail me the forms. This would mean they would arrive very close to the filing deadline, if by then. She told me I should have allowed two months to order forms from the IRS. Had I known I'd need to do that I would have done so!! I asked her to place the (back-up) order for me, although if the first order had been filled, it would mean I'd be getting a surfeit of forms, which is a terrible waste of paper and not in keeping with the cost-cutting efforts of our government!

I then got back onto the website and found and downloaded an application for an Extension of Filing time (5558, I believe)...just in case nothing reached me on time. This, too, seemed like a waste of time and effort since someone would have to process my Extension Request and keep track of when I finally was able to submit my 5500EZ filing. I had a question about that form and called yet another IRS spokesperson who encouraged me to go to the local IRS office in downtown Los Angeles today and said they might very well have the forms in the lobby. I will try that although the last time I drove past that office thinking of doing that very thing, there was a line of about 500 people snaking around the courtyard with a man with a bullhorn instructing them. I don't know what was going on (it was June 29) but if that's any example of the usual length of the line waiting to go through post-9/11 security procedures simply to enter the lobby, it will mean taking at least half of my work-day to get inside and find out whether or not the forms are there. Given the fact that I work on a DOL contract, there is some irony in having to explain my absence to my employers!

I understand the new forms with "drop out" ink are going to make the processing faster on YOUR end, saving taxpayer dollars, etcetcetc. But I wish someone would think about MY end of the filing process and consider returning to the previous years' practice of mailing out the 5500 forms a

couple of months in advance of the filing date to avoid all the hassles and anxiety. Short of that, at least make sure notices ARE sent to warn people of filing procedures and post notices in Post Offices or other public places to remind people of the need to file as well as providing the forms, as you do with tax forms, in the IRS offices and selected large post offices all around the country if you are NOT going to mail the forms out to people.

Most of us are really trying to comply with the IRS requirements. But it shouldn't be this difficult to file some simple forms on time!

I appreciate your setting up a means of communicating with you and taking the time to read this tale of woe. Hopefully the next communication you will have from me will be in the form of my 5500EZ arriving at your offices on time to make the filing deadline!! Merilee R. Oakes, Ph.D.