

701—8.5(422) Electronic filing of Iowa income tax returns. There is no statutory requirement that taxpayers file their Iowa income tax returns electronically. Taxpayers also have the option to file by paper. However, electronic filing allows individuals and businesses that meet department criteria to file their Iowa income tax returns electronically. When a taxpayer files an electronic return, all information related to the return should be electronically transmitted. No information is to be submitted on paper unless specifically requested by the department. A taxpayer's electronic Iowa return shall include the same information as if the taxpayer had filed a paper return.

8.5(1) Definitions. For the purpose of this rule, the following definitions apply, unless the context otherwise requires:

“Acknowledgment” means a report generated by the department and sent electronically to a transmitter via the IRS indicating the department's acceptance or rejection of an electronic submission.

“Declaration for e-File Return form” means a taxpayer declaration form that authenticates the electronic tax return, authorizes its transmission, and consents to the financial transaction order as designated using the financial institution information provided.

“Direct debit” means an order for electronic withdrawal of funds from a taxpayer's financial institution account for payment to the department.

“Direct deposit” means an order for electronic transfer of a refund into a taxpayer's financial institution account.

“E-file provider” means a firm that is assigned an Electronic Filing Identification Number (EFIN) by the IRS to assume any one or more of the following IRS e-file provider roles: electronic return originator, intermediate service provider, transmitter, software developer, or reporting agent.

“Electronic filing” means a paperless filing of the Iowa income tax return, order for financial transaction, or both by way of the IRS e-file program, also known as federal/state electronic filing (MeF).

“Electronic return originator (ERO)” means an authorized IRS e-file provider that originates the electronic submission by any one of the following methods: electronically sending an electronic tax return to a Transmitter that will transmit the electronic tax return to the IRS, directly transmitting the electronic tax return to the IRS, or providing the electronic tax return to an Intermediate Service Provider for processing prior to transmission to the IRS.

“Electronic signature” includes data in electronic form, which is logically associated with other data in electronic form and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign a document. This type of signature has the same legal standing as a handwritten signature if the requirements in either paragraph 8.5(2)“b” or “c” are met. Electronic signatures appear in many forms and may be created by many different technologies. No specific technology is required.

“Intermediate service provider” means the firm that assists with processing submission information between the ERO (or the taxpayer in the case of online filing) and a Transmitter.

“Online filing” means the process for taxpayers to self-prepare returns by entering return data directly into commercially available software, software downloaded from an Internet site and prepared off-line, or through an online Internet site.

“Origination of an electronic return” means the action by an ERO of electronically sending the return directly to an Intermediate Service Provider, a Transmitter, or the IRS.

“Reporting agent” means a firm that originates the electronic submission of certain returns for its clients or transmits the returns to the IRS in accordance with the IRS electronic filing procedures, or both.

“Software developer” means an approved IRS e-file provider that develops software according to IRS and Iowa specifications for the purposes of formatting electronic returns, transmitting electronic returns directly to the IRS, or both. A software developer may sell its software.

“Stockpiling” means collecting returns from taxpayers or from other e-file providers and waiting more than three calendar days after receiving the information necessary for transmission to transmit the returns to the department.

“*Transmitter*” means a firm that transmits electronic tax return information directly to the IRS and routes electronic acknowledgments from the IRS (and the states) to the firm originating the electronic return.

8.5(2) Completion and documentation of the electronic return.

a. The electronic submission must match the prepared return. The taxpayer(s) must declare the authenticity of the electronic return before it is transmitted. If the ERO makes changes to the electronic return after the Declaration for e-File Return form has been signed by the taxpayer(s), a new Declaration for e-File Return form must be completed and signed by the taxpayer(s) before the return is transmitted.

b. Electronic signature via remote transaction. In lieu of in-person handwritten signatures, a paid preparer, at the discretion of the taxpayer, may collect taxpayers’ electronic signatures remotely by a process using identity verification and audit trail in the manner that the IRS allows for Form 8879.

c. Electronic signature via in-person transaction. Before a taxpayer electronically signs a Declaration for e-File Return form in which the ERO is physically present with the taxpayer, the ERO must validate the taxpayer’s identity unless there is a multiyear business relationship. A multiyear business relationship is one in which the ERO has originated returns for the taxpayer for a prior tax year and has identified the taxpayer using a valid government picture identification and the method in paragraph 8.5(2) “b.” For in-person transactions, identity verification through a record check is optional.

d. The ERO must provide the taxpayer with a copy of all information to be filed. The taxpayer and ERO must retain all tax documentation for three years. The Declaration for e-File Return form and accompanying schedules are to be furnished to the department only when specifically requested.

8.5(3) Direct deposit and direct debit.

a. Taxpayers designating direct deposit of the Iowa refund or direct debit of payment remitted to the department on electronically filed returns must provide proof of account ownership to the ERO. The department is not responsible for the misapplication of a direct deposit refund or direct debit payment caused by error, negligence, or wrongdoing on the part of the taxpayer, e-file provider, financial institution, or any agent of the above.

b. Once the return has been transmitted, the financial order may not be altered. The department may, when processing procedures allow, grant a taxpayer’s timely request to revoke the financial order. The taxpayer is responsible for revoking the financial order if the specified payment is not exactly as intended. A direct deposit or direct debit order will be disregarded by the department if the electronic submission is rejected for any reason as indicated in the acknowledgment.

c. The department may, when processing procedures require, convert a direct deposit order to a paper warrant. If a refund is deposited into an incorrect bank account, the department will issue a paper refund warrant once the funds are returned by the financial institution.

d. Payment withdrawal date.

(1) Funds will be withdrawn from the account specified in the direct debit order no sooner than the date specified by the taxpayer.

(2) Payment must be timely made to prevent the assessment of all applicable penalty and interest.

A direct debit payment within an electronic submission is considered timely made when:

1. The department accepts the electronic submission;
2. The electronic postmark date is prior to the tax due date;
3. The payment withdrawal date is prior to the tax due date; and
4. The direct debit payment is honored by the specified financial institution.

(3) When the tax due date has not yet elapsed, the withdrawal date should occur on or before the tax due date. Scheduling a withdrawal date after the tax due date will result in the assessment of all applicable penalty and interest unless the taxpayer otherwise makes payment before the tax due date.

(4) When the tax due date has already elapsed, the withdrawal date should specify immediate payment to prevent the accrual of additional interest.

(5) Withdrawal cannot occur prior to the electronic postmark date. When the taxpayer attempts to schedule a withdrawal date that is prior to the electronic postmark date, the electronic postmark date is the withdrawal date.

(6) If a taxpayer wants to change the withdrawal date specified in a financial order, the taxpayer must revoke the financial order and submit a new financial order. If the department determines that the taxpayer may have erroneously scheduled a withdrawal date, the department may notify the taxpayer of the possible error, but the department is not required to do so.

8.5(4) *Software approval.* Software developers that want to develop electronic submission formatting software for e-filing Iowa returns shall register their respective software products annually with the department. The department publishes specifications, test packages, and testing procedures. Software must pass transmission tests before the department will approve it for electronic filing of Iowa income tax returns. The department will define the test period annually.

8.5(5) *ERO acceptance to participate.* Once accepted by the IRS as an ERO for a specific tax type, the ERO is automatically accepted to e-file Iowa returns of that tax type, provided that the department offers the tax type for e-file.

8.5(6) *Suspension of an e-file provider from participation in the Iowa electronic filing program.*

a. The department may immediately suspend, without notice, an e-file provider from the Iowa electronic filing program. In most cases, a suspension is effective as of the date of the letter informing the e-file provider of the suspension. Before suspending an e-file provider, the department may issue a warning letter describing specific corrective action required to correct deviations set forth in paragraph 8.5(6) “*b.*” An e-file provider will be automatically prohibited from participating in the Iowa electronic filing program if denied participation in, or suspended from, the federal electronic filing program.

b. An e-file provider that is eligible to participate in the federal electronic filing program may be suspended from the Iowa electronic filing program if any of the following conditions occur. The list is for illustrative purposes only and is not deemed to be all-inclusive.

- (1) Deterioration in the format of electronic returns transmitted.
- (2) Unacceptable cumulative error or rejection rate or failure to correct errors resulting from the transmission of electronic returns.
- (3) Untimely received, illegible, incomplete, missing, or unapproved substitute Declaration for e-File Return forms when requested by the department.
- (4) Stockpiling returns at any time while participating in the Iowa electronic filing program.
- (5) Failure on the part of the transmitter to retrieve acknowledgments within two working days of the department’s providing them.
- (6) Failure on the part of the transmitter to initiate the communication of acknowledgments to the ERO within two working days of the department’s providing them.
- (7) Significant complaints about the e-file provider.
- (8) Failure on the part of the e-file provider to cooperate with the department’s efforts to monitor e-file providers, investigate electronic filing abuse, and investigate the possible filing of fraudulent returns.
- (9) Submitting the electronic return with information that is not identical to information on the Declaration for e-File Return form.
- (10) Transmitting the electronic return with software not approved by the department for use in the Iowa electronic filing program for the given tax type and tax period.
- (11) Failure on the part of the e-file provider to provide W-2s, 1099s, or out-of-state tax returns when requested by the department.

8.5(7) *Administrative procedure for denial of participation or suspension of participation.*

a. When a firm has requested participation in the Iowa electronic filing program but there is reason to deny the request, the department shall send a letter to the firm advising that entry into the program has been denied. When an e-file provider is a participant in the Iowa electronic filing program but is to be suspended from the program for any condition described in subrule 8.5(6), the department will send a letter to notify the e-file provider about its suspension from the program.

b. When the firm either disagrees with the denial of participation letter or the suspension from participation letter, the firm must file a written protest to the department within 60 days of the date of the denial letter or the suspension letter. The written protest must be filed pursuant to rule 701—7.8(17A).

During the administrative review process, the denial of the firm's participation in or the suspension of the firm from the Iowa electronic filing program shall remain in effect.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 422.21 and 422.68.

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