

IRS Ends Unannounced Revenue Officer Visits

Cross References

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As part of a larger transformation effort, the Internal Revenue Service has announced a major policy change that will end most unannounced visits to taxpayers by agency revenue officers to reduce public confusion and enhance overall safety measures for taxpayers and employees.

The change reverses a decades-long practice by IRS revenue officers, the unarmed agency employees whose duties include visiting households and businesses to help taxpayers resolve their account balances by collecting unpaid taxes and unfiled tax returns. Effective immediately, unannounced visits will end except in a few unique circumstances and will be replaced with mailed letters to schedule meetings.

IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel announced the change as part of a larger effort to transform IRS operations following passage of the Inflation Reduction Act last year and the creation of the new IRS Strategic Operating Plan in April.

“We are taking a fresh look at how the IRS operates to better serve taxpayers and the nation, and making this change is a common-sense step,” Werfel said. “Changing this long-standing procedure will increase confidence in our tax administration work and improve overall safety for taxpayers and IRS employees.”

The National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) supports the policy change.

“NTEU welcomes the IRS decision to halt unannounced visits by IRS Field Collection employees,” said Tony Reardon, National President of the National Treasury Employees Union “The safety of IRS employees is of paramount importance and this decision will help protect those whose jobs have only grown more dangerous in recent years because of false, inflammatory rhetoric about the agency and its workforce. We applaud Commissioner Werfel’s quick action after hearing the safety concerns raised by NTEU leaders and IRS Field Collection employees who faced dangerous situations that put their safety at risk. We look forward to working with the IRS on this and other actions to protect the safety of all IRS employees.”

Werfel also noted that there have been increased security concerns in recent years on multiple fronts. The growth in scam artists bombarding taxpayers has increased confusion about home visits by IRS revenue officers. Sometimes scam artists appear at the door posing as IRS agents, creating confusion for not just the taxpayers living there but local law-enforcement.

For IRS revenue officers, these unannounced visits to homes and businesses presented risks. Revenue officers routinely faced hazards and uncertainty making unannounced visits to attempt to resolve delinquent tax matters.

“These visits created extra anxiety for taxpayers already wary of potential scam artists,” Werfel said. “At the same time, the uncertainty around what IRS employees faced when visiting these homes created stress for them as well. This is the right thing to do and the right time to end it.”

The change reflects the ongoing evolution of tax administration work taking place. Werfel noted that funding under the Inflation Reduction Act will add more staffing for compliance work. The IRS continues to focus on key areas, such as high-income taxpayers with tax issues, as efforts continue on transforming the IRS. Improved analytics will also help IRS compliance efforts focus on those with the most serious tax issues.

“We have the tools we need to successfully collect revenue without adding stress with unannounced visits,” Werfel said. “The only losers with this change in policy are scammers posing as the IRS.”

Taxpayers can expect appointment letters; limited situations where unannounced visits will occur. In place of the unannounced visits, revenue officers will instead make contact with taxpayers through an appointment letter, known as a 725-B, and schedule a follow-up meeting. This will help taxpayers feel more prepared when it is time to meet.

Taxpayers whose cases are assigned to a revenue officer will now be able to schedule face-to-face meetings at a set place and time, with the necessary information and documents in hand to reach resolution of their cases more quickly and eliminate the burden of multiple future meetings.

The IRS noted there will still be extremely limited situations where unannounced visits will occur. These rare instances include service of summonses and subpoenas; and also sensitive enforcement activities involving seizure of assets, especially those at risk of being placed beyond the reach of the government. To put this in perspective, these types of situations typically number less than a few hundred each year – a small fraction compared to the tens of thousands of unannounced visits that typically occurred annually under the old policy.

The IRS will be updating IRS.gov and internal guidance in the months ahead. The agency also reminds taxpayers with unpaid tax bills that there are several options available to help them with their balance due.

These changes come as part of the IRS Strategic Operating Plan, which was unveiled in April. With 10-year funding available from last year’s Inflation Reduction Act, the IRS has set in motion an effort to transform the agency to improve taxpayer service, add fairness to tax compliance efforts and modernize technology to better serve taxpayers, tax professionals and the nation.