

IT OWES YOU: IRS Wants To Give Money To 2,035 From N.C.

The Internal Revenue Service is looking for 2,035 taxpayers from North Carolina who are owed \$1.8 million in undelivered tax-refund checks.

The IRS can reissue the checks after taxpayers update their addresses.

"We want to get this money back to where it belongs," an IRS spokeswoman, Valerie Thornton, said. "It's a simple process. As soon as taxpayers get us their correct addresses, we can reissue the checks."

Refund checks go astray for reasons that can vary with each taxpayer. Often, it's because a life change causes an address change. If taxpayers move or change their address and fail to notify the IRS or the U.S. Postal Service, a check sent to their last known address is returned to the IRS. The Postal Service said that 17 percent of the

nation's population moves each year, and it processed more than 44 million change-of-address cards in 2001.

This year, a new Internet feature makes it easier for taxpayers to track down whether they have an undelivered refund. The service, which lets people check on the status of refunds online at any time, is available through the "Where's My Refund?" section on the IRS home page at www.irs.gov.

To use the site, taxpayers must enter their Social Security number, their filing status (such as single or married filing jointly), and the amount of the refund shown on their 2001 tax return. When this information is submitted online, taxpayers see a Web page that shows the status of their refund check. They also get instructions on how to resolve problems, whether they may be an

undelivered refund check or some other refund-related issue.

Taxpayers without access to the Internet who think that they may be missing a refund check should first check their records or contact their tax preparer, then call the IRS toll-free assistance line at (800) 829-1040 to update their address.

Taxpayers can avoid undelivered checks by choosing to have their refunds deposited directly into a personal checking or savings account, the IRS said.

Direct deposit also guards against stolen or lost refund checks. The option is available on both paper returns and electronically filed returns. More than 39.7 million taxpayers chose direct deposit this filing season, up 17.5 percent from last year.

Taxpayers who have moved since filing their last tax return can ensure that the IRS has their correct address by filing Form 8822, "Change of Address," with the IRS. They can download the form at www.irs.gov, or request it by calling (800) TAX-FORM, or (800) 829-3676.



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