

Securely Collecting & Returning Carry Forward Data

October 2011

Summary: TaxWise Desktop users are permitted to save a backup of their returns to be able to Carry Forward their Taxpayer Client information in the next tax season. These files must be stored at a central Repository location for each state, and there must be a secure method to collect and distribute these files each year. This document provides options for the transfer of these files

Backed up files for the current season are to be sent to the state person (from now on called the “repository”) designated by the SC and TCS to receive the files. It is not sufficient to merely mail the media with the files to the repository and assume it got there. And, it is expensive to send the media via “Return receipt requested.” This section provides options for sending those files to the repository and assuring that they got there successfully.

Send only backup files via media, as they are encrypted files. Copying and sending individual files presents a security breach, since those files are not encrypted.

Option 1. Use e-mail.

For security purposes, this is the recommended method. Backup the TaxWise returns for the season to your desktop or other location where you know how to find them. The backup consists of two files: “backup.001” and “backup.opt.” Attach these two files to an e-mail message and send them to the repository. The repository, upon receipt of the email, should try to restore the files (only to the point where the files are listed in the restore window, not a full restore). At that point the repository will have verified the condition of the files and will send an email back to the sender acknowledging that the files have been received and are uncorrupted.

NOTE: The repository must agree to use this approach.

Option 2. Use the postal service.

Backup the files to the media you will use to send them to the repository, e.g., flash drive, CD, floppy disk, etc. Put the media in a mailer and send them to the repository. Upon receipt, the repository will again verify that the files are uncorrupted and will send an e-mail to the sender that the files have been received.

Option 3. Use the face-to-face approach.

Just hand the media to the repository in person. This is probably the best way, if the ERO is going to see the repository at the end of the season. E-mail or the postal service should be used otherwise, to avoid transportation costs.

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To complete the verification cycle, the ERO should receive an acknowledgment from the repository. This completes the verification process if the files were uncorrupted. If the files were corrupted, the procedure must be repeated. However, if the ERO doesn't receive this acknowledgment in a reasonable amount of time, it is incumbent on the ERO to query the repository as to whether or not the files were received. If they were, then, again, the verification process is completed. If not, then the files should be e-mailed again or, in the case of postal mail, a tracer should be placed on the package with the USPS. In the latter case, if the package can't be located within two weeks, then notification should be made to the SC and TCS who will report the missing package, via the chain-of-command, to HQ AARP Tax-Aide.

When media are returned to the EROs at the beginning of the next season, the same procedures apply, in reverse. The repository should return the files by e-mail (preferably) or postal mail with verification as described, above. They can also be return in person, possibly at the TC training meeting.