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CRY WOLF!



The incisive newsletter for tax analysts with too much time on their hands.

eFiling

We hear rumblings that some of our fellow tax professionals are not keen on the SARS eFiling system. While we have not done a scientific survey of the reasons for this, three come to mind.

The first is the unfortunate address used for the eFiling system. Those with scatological tendencies may be forgiven the desire to avoid visiting http://www.sarsefiling.co.za lest the content of the address bar distract them from the content of the rest of their browser window and thus lead them astray. Fortunately for these poor souls, help is at hand in the form of the alternative addresses of http://www.efiling.co.za or – for those more willing to trust a government address – http://www.efiling.gov.za.

The second reason that we have heard advanced is the content of the terms and conditions for the use of the eFiling service. We hear that these terms of conditions not only refer to the http://www.sarsefiling.co.za address – thereby seriously discommoding the tax professionals we have discussed already – but also leave tax professionals stuck with joint and several liability if they intentionally or negligently submit false information on behalf of a taxpayer.

Now we can see that both terms (or perhaps conditions) could be a serious inconvenience, so we are pleased to report that – after a sustained lobbying effort by a major grouping of tax professionals – SARS moved on one of these two terms (or conditions, as the case may be) in 2006. While some may consider moving on only one of the two a half-arsed effort, the removal of joint and several liability must come as a welcome relief to those who felt that they might intentionally or negligently submit false information on behalf of a taxpayer some day.

This leaves us with the third possible reason for being less than keen on eFiling. It is that SARS has not yet implemented RFC 1149[1] despite seventeen years passing since its release. This proposed standard for internet communication, together with its 1999 revision RFC 2549,[2] provide an admirable low technology approach to internet communication that would extend the reach of the eFiling system dramatically. SARS cannot even hide behind the fact that these standards are designated as experimental, since RFC 1149 was successfully implemented in Norway in 2001.[3&4]

Come on SARS, cast off your shackles and be the first administration to really take flight with eFiling!

- Olfo and Pawsa Rilpa

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1 http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc1149.txt
2 http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc2549.txt
3 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1321176.stm
4 http://www.blug.linux.no/rfc1149/