

The Appeals Process

Taxpayers have the right to the following:

Informal Conference

1. An informal conference may be requested in writing to Treasury within 60 days of the date on the *Notice*. The following information must be included in the request:

- The amount of tax disputed
- An explanation of the complaint
- Payment of the undisputed portion of the tax bill.

2. A conference with an impartial referee will be established at a date and place that is convenient for all parties. Taxpayers may bring an attorney or appoint a representative in their absence. Hearings may be recorded with prior notification.

3. The referee will make a recommendation to a Treasury Executive who will issue a final decision.

Tax Tribunal or Court of Claims

The final decision from the informal conference or a *Final Assessment* may be appealed to either:

- The Michigan Tax Tribunal within 35 days, which requires payment of the undisputed amount, **or**
- The Court of Claims (Ingham Circuit Court) within 90 days, which requires payment of the full amount of the assessment.

Decisions of the Tax Tribunal or the Court of Claims may be appealed to the Court of Appeals and ultimately to the Michigan Supreme Court.

Non-Payment of Tax Balance

Failure to make payment in full or to enter into an approved payment arrangement will initiate collection action by Treasury. Collection action will not be taken before appropriate notice has been given and due process has been provided. The collection process may be stopped at any time by paying the balance in full or entering into an approved payment arrangement. Treasury may take collection action to secure payment of the debt, including:

Liens: Treasury will file liens on real and personal property to protect the interest of the State. Liens will be filed regardless of whether an approved payment arrangement is in place. *Liens become a public record and may affect the credit rating of the taxpayer. In most cases, property cannot be sold or transferred until the past-due tax is paid and the lien is released.*

Wage Levy: A wage levy requires a specific deduction from a taxpayer's compensation to be applied toward the past-due debt. A filing fee of \$55 will be added to the delinquent amount due for each levy served.

Financial Institution Levy: Treasury may serve a levy against a taxpayer's account(s) at financial institutions which requires the financial institution to send Treasury any funds up to the total past due balance. A filing fee of \$55 will be added to the delinquent amount due for each levy served.

Offsets: Treasury may offset any income tax refunds or payments owed to a taxpayer by the State and apply it to the debt.

Other Actions: Treasury has the authority to take immediate action to freeze assets and restrict the transfer of property.

Taxpayer Identification

It is important to include the correct name and Social Security number or Federal Employer Identification Number on all correspondence and payments to Treasury.

Contact Information

Treasury makes every effort to make tax forms and instructions clear and easy to follow. Forms are available at www.michigan.gov/taxes.

For questions about tax debts that have been assessed, taxpayers should contact the Collection Division at (517) 636-5265. All other questions may be directed to Sales, Use and Withholding Taxes at (517) 636-4730.

Taxpayers experiencing difficulty in resolving tax matters may contact the Taxpayer Advocate Office by writing to:

Taxpayer Advocate Office
Michigan Department of Treasury
Lansing, MI 48922

For complete information, visit:

www.michigan.gov/taxes

Michigan Department of Treasury

Taxpayer Rights During a Cash Basis Audit

Working Together

Tax audits are performed to verify that a taxpayer has properly accrued and paid all applicable taxes. Statutory authority to conduct audits for the taxes administered by the Michigan Department of Treasury (Treasury) is provided in Section 205.3a of the Revenue Act, Public Act 122 of 1941.

Treasury auditors are expected to provide:

- Prompt, fair, and courteous service
- Confidentiality.

Taxpayers have a responsibility to:

- File returns on time with the correct payment (if necessary).
- Make sure returns are correct, regardless of who prepares them.
- Provide documentation as requested to complete an audit or review.

This brochure is intended to help clarify taxpayer rights and responsibilities, and provide an overview of the cash basis audit process; it does not take the place of the law.

For complete information, visit:

www.michigan.gov/taxes

General Audit Overview

It is not possible to audit all of the taxpayers in Michigan with the limited resources that are available. Instead, computer-generated risk assessment models are used to evaluate taxpayers for audit.

A cash basis taxpayer is one that operates a small to medium size business where the majority of sales are paid for with cash. If a taxpayer is chosen for a cash basis audit, generally, a field interview and store survey is conducted without prior notice to the taxpayer. The store survey documents the layout of the store and identifies the type of items being sold. The survey gives the auditor an understanding of business activities, which helps minimize the time needed to complete the audit. Taxpayers have the right to:

- Ask that the audit take place at a reasonable time in a convenient location.
- Represent oneself, have someone accompany him or her or, with authorization, have a third party represent the taxpayer in his or her absence.
- Receive copies of the audit work papers that show how the auditor determined any changes to taxes due or applicable refunds.
- Meet with the auditor or the auditor's supervisor to discuss the audit findings.

During the course of the audit, the auditor must adhere to the following provisions of the Revenue Act.

The Audit Process

Auditor

Section 205.3a of the Revenue Act authorizes the examination of the books and records of a taxpayer to determine if the correct tax was reported and paid. Treasury auditors are professionals, familiar with the application of Michigan tax law in the business environment. The auditor assigned to an audit will conduct a fair and impartial examination of the taxpayer's records. While the audit is in progress, the auditor will answer any questions that may arise. When the audit is finished, the auditor will explain the audit findings and the alternatives available to the taxpayer if the taxpayer disagrees with the audit results.

Examination of Records

To perform a cash basis audit, the auditor must examine certain records. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Federal and Michigan tax returns
- Annual sales tax returns and monthly worksheets
- Work papers and accounting data used to prepare tax returns
- Profit and loss statements broken down by month and category
- Sales journals or documentation to support reported sales
- Bank statements and cancelled checks
- Check registers and stubs
- Cash register tapes (z tapes)
- Inventory purchase invoices
- Universal product code (UPC) lists.

The Revenue Act requires taxpayers to furnish all records requested by the auditor that are necessary for performing a fair and impartial audit.

If necessary, information may also be obtained from external sources to make a proper audit determination. External sources may include Michigan Liquor Control Commission, Lottery Commission, beer, wine, and cigarette suppliers, other suppliers and government agencies as necessary.

Audit Method

The auditor's first step is to review the accounting, tax accrual, and reporting systems and evaluate the internal controls within each. Information received during the field interview and store survey will be incorporated into the audit determination. The auditor may use sampling methods. In most cases, the auditor will categorize purchases by product type for the test periods. Errors found in representative samples of business records are projected over the entire audit period. Sampling provides accurate results with significant savings of time and manpower for the State and the taxpayer.

If the records are inadequate to prepare a fair determination, the audit is based on the best information available.

Statute of Limitations

Generally, the statute of limitations is four years for the taxes administered by Treasury. An audit normally covers the most recent four-year period. However, tax may be assessed for any period if a return was not filed.

Questions

The taxpayer should direct questions to the auditor who performs the audit. If assistance is needed before the audit begins or if concerns arise during the audit, the taxpayer should contact the auditor or the auditor's supervisor or manager.

Confidentiality

Treasury employees honor a taxpayer's right to confidentiality. Except where required by law, taxpayers must authorize the disclosure of tax information to any third party before it can be released. To authorize, use the *Power of Attorney* (Form 151), available on Treasury's Web site.

Notification of Audit Determination

1. **Notice of Preliminary Audit Determination:** Treasury will send a *Notice of Preliminary Audit Determination (NOPAD)* that identifies either the tax, interest, and penalty amount due or any refund owed to the taxpayer. Audit work papers that substantiate the audit determination will also be provided to the taxpayer. If the taxpayer is in agreement with the amount due, payment should be submitted by the response date identified in the *NOPAD*. If the taxpayer disagrees with the amount due, the auditor should be contacted immediately.

The taxpayer should sign the *NOPAD* and return it to the auditor. By signing the *NOPAD*, the taxpayer is acknowledging receipt of the audit work papers and indicating whether the audit determination is agreed or disagreed upon. The signing of the *NOPAD* has no effect on any appeal action sought by the taxpayer.

2. **Final Audit Determination Letter:** Approximately 60 days after receiving the *NOPAD*, a *Final Audit Determination Letter* will be issued. If the taxpayer did not submit payment after receiving the *NOPAD*,

a *Notice of Intent to Assess (Notice)* will be issued. If the taxpayer disagrees with the liability amount, a written request for an informal conference may be submitted to Treasury within 60 days of the *Notice* date (instructions are provided on the *Notice* for requesting an informal conference). If the audit results in a refund and the taxpayer disagrees with the determination, instructions are provided on the *Final Audit Determination Letter* for requesting an informal conference.

3. **Bill for Taxes Due (Final Assessment):** Sixty days after the *Notice*, Treasury will issue a *Bill for Taxes Due* unless the amount due is paid in full, an informal conference has been requested, or Treasury has received information to correct the amount due.

Paying the Tax

Payments may be made any time during the billing process. If full payment cannot be made, a payment arrangement may be requested from the Collection Division.

Penalty and Interest

Interest and/or penalty will apply as long as there is a tax balance due. Penalty on an assessment may be waived if reasonable cause for failure to pay on time is demonstrated. Reasonable cause may be serious illness or death, a fire or natural disaster, or criminal acts against the taxpayer. The penalty waiver will apply only to periods directly affected by the circumstances. Waiver requests must be made in writing. Refer to Revenue Administrative Bulletin 2005-3 Penalty Provisions for additional details.