

Inside This Issue

Feb. 28 is Last Day for Special Tax Option for Haiti Relief Donations

Video

Haiti Earthquake Donations: [English](#) / [Spanish](#) / [ASL](#)

For this and other videos: [YouTube/IRSVideos](#)

WASHINGTON — Taxpayers wishing to claim their Haiti relief donations on the tax return they are filling out this season must make those donations by the end of this month, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

Individuals and corporations have until midnight on Sunday, Feb. 28, to make cash contributions to charities providing earthquake relief in Haiti. These contributions can be claimed on either a 2009 or 2010 return, but not both. Contributions made after that date but before the end of the year can only be claimed on a 2010 return.

Contributions made by text message, check, credit card or debit card qualify for this special option. Donations charged to a credit card before the end of February count for 2009. This is true even if the credit card bill isn't paid until after Feb. 28. Also, checks count for 2009 as long as they are mailed by the end of this month and clear your financial institution shortly thereafter.

Taxpayers can benefit from their donations most quickly by filing their 2009 returns early, filing electronically and choosing direct deposit. Refunds take as few as ten days and can be directly deposited into a savings, checking or brokerage account, or used to purchase Series I U.S. savings bonds.

This special provision, enacted Jan. 22, does not apply to contributions of property. Eligible contributions must be made specifically for the relief of victims in areas affected by the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti. Gifts made directly to individual victims are not deductible. Notice 1396, a one-page notice describing this provision, is available on IRS.gov and is printed in English, Spanish, French and Haitian Creole.

To get a tax benefit, individuals must itemize their deductions on Schedule A. Those who claim the standard deduction, including all short-form filers, are not eligible.

Taxpayers should be sure their contributions go to qualified charities. Most organizations eligible to receive tax-deductible donations are listed in a searchable online database available on IRS.gov under Search for Charities. Some organizations, such as churches or governments, may be qualified even though they are not listed on IRS.gov. Donors can find out more about organizations helping Haitian earthquake victims from agencies such as USAID.

The IRS reminds donors that contributions to foreign organizations generally are not deductible. IRS Publication 526, Charitable Contributions, provides information on making contributions to charities.

Federal law requires that taxpayers keep a record of any deductible donations they make. For donations by text message, a telephone bill will meet the recordkeeping requirement if it shows the name of the donee organization, the date of the contribution and the amount of the contribution. In addition, for text

message donations of \$250 or more, taxpayers must obtain a written acknowledgement from the charity. For cash contributions made by other means, be sure to keep a bank record, such as a cancelled check, or a receipt from the charity showing the name of the charity and the date and amount of the contribution. Publication 526 has further details on the recordkeeping rules for cash contributions.