

Companies House issue 'don't leave it until the last minute' advice to businesses

Press release

Company directors and accountants urged to file earlier than usual and online.



Companies across the UK are being urged not to leave filing their annual accounts until the last minute and consider going paperless, as the disruption caused by coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to affect people's lives, businesses and the economy.

Companies House's [online filing service](#) – which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – can take as little as 15 minutes and has inbuilt checks to help directors avoid mistakes. Accounts filed on paper are 6 times more likely to be rejected than accounts submitted electronically (7.5% compared to just 1.2% respectively).

Paper accounts submitted too close to the 31 December 2020 deadline, which are then rejected, risk not having enough time to be corrected, re-submitted and manually checked. This type of late accounts will incur an automatic late filing penalty; however, if the late delivery of accounts was directly caused by the coronavirus outbreak, we will treat penalty appeals sympathetically.

In line with government guidance and restrictions surrounding coronavirus, there is currently a reduced number of staff working at Companies House offices. The processing of accounts filed on paper for the 2019/20 financial year is, as a result, expected to take significantly longer this year.

Companies House Chief Executive Louise Smyth says:

By asking companies to submit their accounts early and preferably online, we are trying to ensure that they experience peace of mind during the busy end of year filing period.

In common with so many organisations in these unprecedented times, we currently have a reduced number of people in our offices due to the ongoing coronavirus crisis and the government guidance and restrictions surrounding the pandemic.

As a consequence of that, it's going to take longer than it normally would to process accounts that are filed on paper, which need to be manually checked.

We want to do all we can to help companies during the pandemic, as well as ensuring the safety and wellbeing of everyone who works for Companies House. It's a delicate balance, but one we are determined to get right.

Companies can also use [third party software](#) to file their accounts electronically.

- Companies House is an Executive Agency of the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).
- Companies House is the register of limited companies in the UK. It incorporates and dissolves limited companies, registers the information companies are legally required to supply, and makes that information available to the public.
- There are over 4.5 million companies registered in the UK. Over 500,000 companies are registered each year.
- On 25 June 2020, the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 received royal assent and introduced measures to reduce the burden on businesses during the coronavirus outbreak. The vast majority of companies received a 3-month extension to their accounts filing deadline.

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