



Local tax preparers are bracing for a late rush

By Andrea Rumbaugh

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The Affordable Care Act could be driving more procrastinators to tax preparers in Houston during this year's deadline rush.

As of March 27, the Internal Revenue Service had received more than 90 million individual tax returns, or roughly three out of five returns it expects this season. There are millions of stragglers.

"I do see a lot of people taking their time, thinking about it, waiting to file their tax returns," said Sandra Martin, a senior tax adviser for H&R Block in northwest Houston. She added, "I do see more people tending to wait than in prior years."

Starting Wednesday, when the pace typically reaches a frenzy, Martin will see about 16 people a day. That's one person every 45 minutes, with more customers dropping off documents. The office will see at least 100 people a day.

Hours will be extended, too, tacking on two additional hours each workday and four additional hours Saturday and Sunday. On April 15, the doors stay open until the last person is served.

Martin cited two main reasons people push the April 15 deadline: They owe money and aren't ready to pay the government or, beginning this year, they're confused about how the health care law commonly referred to as Obamacare affects their taxes.