

# The Employer Self-Service Portal (ESSP): Everything You Need to Know

September 2014



Department of Employment Services • 4058 Minnesota Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20019 • (202) 698-7550  
<http://does.dc.gov/>

## A Message from the Director



We are pleased to announce **the first phase of our employer online portal** that will offer self-service options to assist you with completing your routine business transactions with DOES in a safe, secure, online environment. The Employer Self-Service Portal (ESSP) will provide you with **online services** that will offer you the convenience of conducting business with us from your desk – expanding our availability beyond the scope of traditional business hours. As we continue in our endeavors to expand our online capabilities, we welcome your feedback.

**Be a part of our mission** and help us to customize the solution to your needs while providing you with a level of care and interaction that embraces a high-touch, high-technology approach to exceptional customer service.

Our first phase will allow you to perform foundational business services in an environment that is user-friendly and fully accessible at your convenience. We have outlined several responses to address some of the most frequently asked questions.

For detailed information about the Employer Self-Service Portal (ESSP), please visit our website - <http://does.dc.gov/page/ui-taxes> or contact us via [ESSP.info@dc.gov](mailto:ESSP.info@dc.gov).

**Acting Director F. Thomas Luparello**

## When will the Employer Self-Service Portal (ESSP) be available?

The Department of Employment Services (DOES) plans to launch the Employer Self-Service Portal (ESSP) on **Oct 1, 2014**. New employers may register, and if liable for payment of unemployment insurance (UI) contributions (taxes), obtain an account number. Beginning with the quarter ending 09/30/2014, employers or their agents will be able to electronically submit quarterly wage and contribution reports using the ESSP website. Paper forms or CDs will no longer be required. However, to accommodate employers who will not be able to transition to electronic filing by the October 1 implementation date, we will mail paper forms to ensure the timely processing of quarterly filings. Please note that the use of the **ESSP will be the preferred communication method for all our customers**. Users will be able to file wages and pay taxes due, maintain useful information regarding their accounts, review tax rates, and search wage and payment history online. The new online portal will serve as a convenient tool for employers and agents by providing online system access.

### **When and how will Employers be able to set up access to the system?**

Existing employers will receive temporary credentials and detailed instructions prior to system start date. They will need to access their account and change their temporary password to ensure that their information will be maintained according to data security standards. Employers will be able to **access profile information, account balance, current rate, and other important information online**. After initially signing into their account, authorized users will be able to update their profile information, establish a relationship with an Agent, and file their wage reports.

### **When and how will Third Party Agents (TPAs) be able to set up access to the system?**

New TPAs will need to create an Agent account and establish relationships with clients. Verification of the established relationship is required either by confirmation from the employer or by existing Power of Attorney (POA) on file with DOES. Following the authentication process, the TPA will be authorized to perform services according to the assignment. There will be a limited time period that TPAs will be allowed to submit wages before the relationship is confirmed or fully approved; however, the wages may be removed later if the relationship is not confirmed.

We are working to improve the manner in which TPAs and employers establish agent relationships with DOES. **It is imperative for employers who currently use a TPA to log onto the ESSP and establish their agent relationship**. This will reduce the time it takes to process UI tax information during our transition period. We expect that Agents who submitted wages for their client employers in 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2014 will receive temporary credentials and detailed instructions prior to the system start date.

### **Will employers that have not received an account number be able to file wages via ESSP?**

Employers who are required to file wage reports and who do not have an account number must register their business through the ESSP and complete their required filing. **Employers will be able to register, receive an account number via the ESSP, and file wages in the same session.**

If a review of your account indicates you were not assigned the correct tax rate, based on the information provided during the registration process, an adjustment will be made to your account. All wage reports submitted without an account number will be returned to the sender and will not be processed.

The ESSP will also provide an option to register a new employer by a TPA. This option, however, will need additional authorization by the employer (See the answer on establishing TPAs access).

### **What will be the changes to wage filings?**

All employers and agents will be able to enter wages in three ways: (1) manually by entering data into the system, (2) retrieving and modifying information from previous online reports, or (3) uploading data into one of the four specified file formats (ICESA, EWF2, XML, or CSV). The system will generate real time calculations of UI taxes due. Users will then be able to directly pay their taxes due.

DOES currently accepts two types of electronic submissions: (1) single file submissions and (2) bulk or multiple file submissions. **As of October 1, 2014, we will no longer accept electronic submissions that are delivered to the agency on CD or magnetic media**. Employers will be required to submit their quarterly wage information through the ESSP.

Slight changes have been made to the layout of the ICESA file in an attempt to ease the reporting burden on employers. With the exception of “Wage only” filers, employers or agents who are unable to adjust their file formats for reporting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2014 will be able to report in the old ICESA format for this quarter only. DOES will **no longer accept the Wage-only format for quarterly file submission**.

Please contact us via [ESSP.info@dc.gov](mailto:ESSP.info@dc.gov) for actual information and file format specifications.

#### **What will be the changes to the file format/specifications?**

All users will be able to file wages in one of four different file formats (ICESA, EWF2, XML, CSV) via the “*wage file upload*” feature. The system will validate and process the incoming file, calculate taxes and charges due, and generate a confirmation file. Upon receipt of the confirmation file, the users will be able to submit their online payments. Agents will be able to submit payments for multiple clients through the “*manual payment allocation*” feature or by uploading a payment allocation file.

Details on the structure of all file types will be posted soon. Even though only minimal changes are expected for current ICESA filers, the ESSP will allow submitting the current ICESA file format for wage reports in 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2014. **The ESSP will not be able to accept the current ICESA or Wage-only file format after December 31, 2014 (4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2014).**

Please contact us via [ESSP.info@dc.gov](mailto:ESSP.info@dc.gov) for actual information and file format specifications.

#### **How will employers be able to pay their taxes due?**

**Users will have capability to pay their taxes via ACH debit or by check**, either immediately after the submitting the wages or anytime if they have an outstanding balance on their account. A payment related to the wage submission has to be processed within standard quarterly due dates to prevent the assignment of additional charges. The ESSP will not allow for ACH credit or credit card payment at this phase. Contact us at [ESSP.info@dc.gov](mailto:ESSP.info@dc.gov) for more details.

#### **How will agents be able to pay taxes due based on a bulk wage submission?**

Authorized agents will be able to file wage reports on behalf of their clients and pay their taxes either individually or in bulk. **The ESSP will offer TPAs the ability to allocate payment amounts for the bulk wage submission** either manually or by using a modifiable payment allocation file generated by the ESSP from submitted wage data.

The individual payment amount will be applied against the amounts due of the employers according to the same rules as the payments submitted by the employers. Contact us at [ESSP.info@dc.gov](mailto:ESSP.info@dc.gov) for more details and file format specifications.

#### **What new changes will be implemented with the rollout of the Employer Self-Service Portal?**

There are several changes that will be implemented in conjunction with or shortly after the implementation of the ESSP:

- **Discontinuation of the quarterly/annual mailing of the wage filing**  
Effective with the quarter ending December 31, 2014 (10/1/2014 – 12/31/2014), **DOES will discontinue sending quarterly wage reports to employers**. The ESSP will be the

primary mechanism for the filing and payment of quarterly UI taxes and assessments. We will send reminders to employers prior to the quarterly filing dates and will provide online tutorials to introduce employers to the new ESSP prior to the April 30, 2015 filing deadline for the fourth quarter 2014 filing.

➤ **Discontinuation of Wage Only file formats**

Effective with the quarter ending June 30, 2014, **DOES will not process quarterly filings that are submitted in the “Wage Only” file format.** Due to increased data sharing with regulatory agencies, wage only filings do not provide sufficient information for cross-matching purposes. Employers that currently use the wage only filing format will have the option to manually enter employee quarterly wage data directly into the Employer Self Service Portal (ESSP) or switch to one of the four filing formats supported by ESSP. Employers that currently use the wage only filing format will receive a separate communication. Technical information for our approved reporting formats can be requested at [ESSP.info@dc.gov](mailto:ESSP.info@dc.gov).

➤ **Mandatory filing through the Employer Self Service Portal**

Effective with the quarter ending December 31, 2014 (10/1/2014 – 12/31/2014), **all employers who employ at least 5 employees will be required to utilize the ESSP** to file quarterly reports and pay the UI quarterly taxes and assessments. While the online filing requirement does not apply to all employers, we encourage all employers to utilize the ESSP. It is essential for employers to file reports and pay taxes on or before the report due date. We are attempting to remove the barriers that prevented employers from meeting their UI filing and paying requirements in a timely manner. When the ESSP goes online, we will adhere to the statutory penalty assessment dates. Therefore, we encourage employers to utilize the ESSP to guarantee the timely submission of the UI wage information and payments.

➤ **New reporting requirements for all District of Columbia employers**

The Office of Wage and Hour has regulatory authority to monitor and enforce that certain District of Columbia employers pay the minimum wage to their employees. To assist the Office of Wage and Hour with their new compliance role and to streamline the number of separate filings that are required by District of Columbia employers, DOES will capture the new reporting elements for all employers effective with the quarter ending December 31, 2014 (10/1/2014 – 12/31/2014). **The ESSP will be configured for employers to furnish the individual hours worked for each employee in the quarterly wage filing.** Combining the data capturing quarterly wage reporting and the number of hours worked for each employee will result in a tremendous savings to the District and will also reduce the amount of time employers devote to completing and filing the paperwork necessary to comply with DC statutes. Additional information about the minimum wage requirements will be forthcoming from the Office of Wage and Hour.

**ATTENTION EMPLOYERS:** DOES will be offering *complimentary* ESSP training workshops on seven dates in October: October 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, and 30. If you are interested, please send an email to [ESSP.info@dc.gov](mailto:ESSP.info@dc.gov) with the subject line: “ESSP Training Workshop” and request your preferred date. **Space is limited** to 20 individuals per session, so please sign up early to reserve your spot! We look forward to working with you.