



U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms and Explosives

Assistant Director

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www.atf.gov

Dear Industry Colleague:

As a result of recent changes in state laws concerning certain National Firearms Act (NFA) firearms and devices and other factors, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has experienced an exponential increase in NFA applications in recent years and months. For example, in fiscal year 2005, while ATF processed nearly 41,600 NFA applications, by 2013 that number had skyrocketed by more than 380 percent to more than 199,900 applications. The increase is significant because of the volume as well as the short period of time in which applications have spiked.

To expedite processing, in 2013, after more than a year of development, ATF launched its “eForms” to provide a tool for more efficient filing of ATF firearms forms. When ATF implemented the eForms system, paper NFA Tax-Paid applications took 9 months to process, while eForms reduced processing time to within 100 days. After a year of successful implementation, in January 2014, ATF attended the annual Shooting, Hunting, Outdoor Trade Show (SHOT Show) to spread the word about eForms and the system’s efficient processing of applications. Improvements noted in the eForms system include the following:

- form submission and payment processing time reduced to approximately 5 minutes from 3-4 business days;
- elimination of 8 weeks of data entry processing backlog;
- elimination of an estimated 30 days processing time due to errant data entry.

With these statistics in mind and based on the feedback from industry, the eForms initiative has clearly addressed a long overdue industry need. As a result, the number of registered users has grown from 673 in 2013 to more than 10,000 today. In fact, the number of eForms submitted has exceeded 50,000, with the most significant volume seen in Form 3 and Form 4 applications. Since January 2014, approximately 50 percent of NFA applications have been submitted via eForms. This surge in demand has created the need to temporarily scale back eForms submissions while the system is enhanced to handle greater capacity in the future.

To accommodate this substantial increase in application volume, ATF must enhance the eForms initiative to ensure that we can meet the industry’s needs as the volume of applications continues to exceed growth expectations. Our goal is to decrease processing times and continue to enhance NFA availability without impact from significant application spikes or volume increases as seen during the last few years.

To accomplish this goal, ATF will take aggressive steps immediately regarding eForms and existing paper application processes. Measures already taken include the following:

- ATF has surged staffing availability to seven days per week to process both eForms and paper applications. As a result, ATF has already reduced the backlog of applications from more than 80,000 to 73,700, an almost 8 percent reduction in the total backlog since March 20, 2014. Monthly processing volume has increased from 17,200 to 23,600 per month due to the surge, representing a 37 percent increase in form processing.
- ATF is immediately hiring 15 additional staff to assist in processing NFA applications. In addition, another 15 current staff members are cross-training to assist with NFA application processing.
- Staff from across ATF have been recruited to assist in backlog processing.
- ATF has prioritized Form 3 and Form 4 paper application processing, as appropriate, while we are bolstering eForms capabilities. This action will ensure that the highest volume of pending applications is given higher priority and that industry needs are met.
- ATF has engaged world-class private sector companies to assist in enhancing eForms capacity and functionality to provide industry with the most efficient service possible.
- ATF will limit routine maintenance and processing within the eForms system to one day each week, which will allow registered industry users to have the full eForms system capacity available during other days. Each Wednesday, a day selected based on use patterns and with the input of our customers, ATF will close the system for routine maintenance and processing. Application processing will continue outside of the system on all weekdays, but ATF will avoid routine maintenance and processing within the eForms system on other days to ensure that eForms remains available to our customers.
- This week, eForms will once again be available initially for the processing of Form 6 and Form 6A. As capacity is enhanced over the next several weeks, eForms will then continue to accept Forms 1, 2, 5, 9, 5300.11 and 10. All users may continue to submit paper forms throughout this process, and ATF will continue to surge and prioritize to ensure that this enhancement process does not impede commerce. Ultimately, our largest volume of requests, Form 3 and Form 4, will return to the new and improved eForms, which we expect to accomplish in the short term.
- ATF will continue to monitor application processing timelines on a weekly basis to ensure that progress is being made in the reduction of the backlog. At the same time, ATF will enhance the eForms system in ways that may avoid backlogs in the future, despite the spikes and volume increases. As additional enhancements or surge steps become apparent, we will adapt our plans to address those needs.

ATF and industry have benefitted from the eForms and ATF remains fully committed to its success and to the reduction of the backlog in paper and eForms applications. The steps outlined above reflect ATF's commitments, and we will ensure that our industry colleagues remain informed of our progress and have the opportunity to provide input on eForms enhancements.

We offer our sincere thanks to the eForms user community for your patience and support of the eForms system as these enhancements are completed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marvin G. Richardson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marvin G. Richardson
Deputy Assistant Director
ATF Enforcement Programs and Services