

**Lee County VCB encourages use of new online
payment option for tourist development tax**
Online remittance system offers ease, efficiency, greater accuracy

LEE COUNTY, FL – The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) is urging travel industry partners who collect tourist development tax, also known as bed tax, to use an online payment system launched earlier this year by the Lee County clerk’s office.

“The ease and efficiency of remitting payments electronically eliminates the need to create, sign and mail checks,” said Tamara Pigott, executive director of the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau. “Plus, the online system performs all tax calculations and can significantly reduce the number of manual calculation errors. The remitter can make an accurate online payment with real-time data.”

Lee County implemented a new Tourist Development Tax system in 2009, with the intention of including an online payment option. It launched that option in May of this year, and about 46 percent of the taxes collected this past July came through the system. The Florida Department of Revenue and many other counties also offer and encourage online tax remittances.

“Some of our clients now prefer to remit online because they were already set up to do so,” said Tim Parks, manager of the tourist development tax for the county’s Internal Audit Department. “Producing a check is now the exception for some of our more sophisticated clients. Increased use of the online payment system will allow for increased efficiency.”

Parks said every active account owner (monthly and quarterly remitters) has been mailed a letter with instructions to establish the pay online feature. New account owners are provided

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the information when they register with the Lee County Clerk of Courts. They must first establish a bank account with the Clerk so that the funds can be transferred upon their instructions.

The online payment option is voluntary, and payments are still accepted by check or cash. The Clerk mails blank tax returns to all active accounts once each year, and tax remitters can submit a check with the completed tax returns on a pre-determined payment frequency. A few cash payments are received at the Finance Department counter.

While the old system works fine, Parks said it is less efficient than the new online payment system, since the Clerk’s office spends countless hours handling incoming and outgoing mail and

manually posting thousands of tax returns from clients into its computer system. In addition, a percentage of tax returns are lost in the mail, and a portion of returns include manual calculation errors. The online payment system significantly reduces errors, since it allows the return data to be entered into the system only once.

Questions regarding the new online payment system can be directed to the Lee County Clerk of Courts at (239) 533-2190 or at www.leeclerk.org.