What happens in the case of poor record keeping or lost records?

ZRA may assess the tax due and any interest payable on any omitted income using available information or may raise an estimated assessment. Further, penalties may be charged for failure to comply with specific tax provisions or regulations as guided by the various tax Acts.

What happens after the audit?

After the audit, the taxpayer will be notified of the findings. The auditor will explain any adjustment to the taxpayer or their representative before finalising the audit.

Where the taxpayer has information that the auditor may not have considered or has reason to believe that the auditor may have made mistakes, he/she should bring up all such items at the reconciliation stage of the audit. After reconciliation, an audit agreement will then be signed by both the auditor and the taxpayer or his appointed agent clearly highlighting the areas that have been consented to or objected to by the taxpayer.

Upon conclusion of the audit, the auditor will proceed to produce an assessment of tax and the liability, if any, is payable within 30 days. The taxpayer has a right to start the objection process for the items not agreed to within 30 days and if still dissatisfied with the objection determination, the taxpayer has the right to appeal to the Tax Appeals Tribunal and, ultimately, to the Supreme Court for final determination, if they so wish.

For more information contact:

Call Centre: 4111
Email: advice@zra.org.zm
Website: www.zra.org.zm

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TAX AUDIT

Introduction

A tax audit is an activity or set of activities, including an examination of a tax return of a taxpayer, performed by a tax inspector to determine a taxpayer's compliance to relevant tax laws and procedures.

It entails an examination of a person's business financial records to ensure that the taxpayer declared correctly in the tax return. An audit can be carried out on any of the tax types that the taxpayer maybe registered for with ZRA.

The principle objective of tax audits is to test the credibility of the declared or assessed tax.

Triggers of Tax Audit

Audits can be conducted at any time as a routine check by the Authority on selected taxpayers for compliance purposes. However, a tax audit can arise as a result of failure to comply with tax obligations.

Selection of a Taxpayer for an Audit

There is procedure that is followed in selecting audit cases. ZRA develops criteria to select audit cases and that is what is followed.

How often can one be audited?

There is no limit on how many times a taxpayer can be audited by ZRA.

Expectations of/from a Taxpayer Prior to an Audit

ZRA will normally request for an appointment with the taxpayer prior to commencement of an audit. The tax audit appointment letter will indicate the period, tax type(s), nature of audit, and the books and records that are expected to be checked. Therefore, the taxpayer is expected to make available all requested books and records prior to the audit as well as during the audit.

How many years back can you be audited?

ZRA has the legal authority to audit any type of individual or business return up to Six years from the end of that year. If fraud is suspected, the duration is not restricted to the Six years; it can go as far back as the period of commencement of the fraud which may be longer than the stated period.

Types of Audits

Audits can vary in their scope and the level of detail to which they are conducted.

a) Comprehensive audit (Integrated and Single Tax Type)

This is an Audit that is detailed and looks at broad categories of risk and may focus on one tax type or cut across tax types (integrated). This type of audit looks at the affairs of the taxpayer in totality covering a period of at least one charge year.

b) Issue audits

This is an audit that looks at a specific issue (area or item) in a specific period (one return period, that is; one month, one year, etc., as the case maybe). These audits are initiated through credibility parameters and can be added as recommended cases.

c) Credibility check

This is an audit meant to check the credibility of specific returns which have failed some parameters.

d) Refund audit

This refers to audits generated as a result of refund claims.

e) De-registration audit

This refers to audits generated as a result of a taxpayer ending the business or de-registering from one tax type.

f) Educational audits

These are audits intended to provide information to the taxpayer on their obligations and rights, and to offer advice on specific issues.

How do field tax audits work?

An audit is initiated when a tax inspector/auditor sends a notice to the taxpayer requesting additional information about an item, or items, on a return, or to notify them of an error that needs to be adjusted. It is very important that a taxpayer always responds to these notices.

Before the field audit, an auditor will contact the taxpayer to arrange a convenient time to meet at a ZRA office or, if a business, at the business' location. Audits may also be arranged, by mutual consent, to take place at the accountant's or other representative's office.

Field audits are conducted during normal working hours. The auditor will describe the types of records that a taxpayer needs to provide, and will explain the planned audit method and procedures.

Advantages of a tax audit

- Facilitates the provision of tax education
- Builds positive reputation of the organisation
- Detection of errors in the accounting procedures
- Suggestions for improvement in handling tax matters
- Identification of weaknesses in the accounting system
- Enhanced credibility and reliability of the figures being submitted to prospective purchasers

Responsibilities of a business owner

The responsibilities of the taxpayer during an audit include:

a) Cooperating with tax auditors at all times.
b) Providing honest and accurate information to ZRA.
c) Refraining from making payment offers to ZRA auditors.
d) Complying with all other tax obligations imposed by the tax Acts.