HOLIDAY GREETINGS

ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDWEST INSULATION CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION, WE WISH TO EXTEND TO ALL OF YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS, HAPPY HANAKAH, AND A MOST JOYOUS AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

TO:  THE MICA MEMBERSHIP

Merry Christmas MICA family!

Another year has slipped by; it seems each one goes by faster than the last. I hope this time of year finds you closer to friends, family and loved ones. The Day after Thanksgiving signals the start of the mad Christmas rush, parties, dinners, office parties, spouse’s office parties, friends in town trying to cram a year of visiting into 5 days and, of course, last minute shopping. Thanks to modern media it's easier and easier to lose sight of what Christmas is all about. I think if retail had its way, we'd all be camping out daily to be the first in line to get the "huge" discount on the latest thing we don't need. A silver lining of being laid up after foot surgery is that I physically couldn't go out and join the shopping madness. Though, I'll admit, Amazon Prime has been quite helpful!

If you're like me, the chaos can take its toll on you, and you need some down time to recharge your batteries. It seems harder now, but you've got to find some time to turn off the iPad, iPhone, kindle, twitter, Facebook, Instagram, CNN, Fox News, your laptop, your TVs, and your work phone, so you can turn your brain off for a little. It's amazing how you can feel after only an hour or so of zero distractions. In fact, it's so critical to learn how to shut out distractions, Grenville Kleiser (Canadian author of dozens of personal development books) says “The ability to apply your mind steadily and exclusively to one subject at a time is a mark of superior power and essential to really great achievement.” What's interesting is that quote is from 1917! Imagine how much more important (and rare) it is today.

The following is an excerpt from a 1988 Sports Illustrated article by Greg Smith about Muhammad Ali.

"He entered the long driveway of his farm, parked and left the car. He led me into a barn. On the floor, leaning against the walls, were paintings and photographs of him in his prime, eyes keen, arms thrust up in triumph, surrounded by the cluster of people he took around the world with him.

He looked closer and noticed it. Across his face in every picture, streaks of bird dung. He glanced up toward the pigeons in the rafters. No malice, no emotion at all flickered in his eyes. Silently, one by one, he turned the pictures to the wall.

Outside, he stood motionless and moved his eyes across his farm. He spoke from his throat, without moving his lips. I had to ask him to repeat it. "I had the world," he said, "and it wasn't nothin'.""

Without a doubt, Ali had been able to block out his distractions and become one of the best boxers in the world. His focus put him at the top of his game and on the cover of Sports Illustrated 38 times. Imagine what you can accomplish in the New Year eliminating distractions and really learning how to focus on your priorities. Just make sure those priorities fit with your family and your faith, because for Ali he had achieved the fame, fortune and status he'd always strived for and ultimately "it was nothin."

Thank you for reading,

Ben Pfister

President of MICA
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INSULATION ADVOCATE: STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The following article is taken from the “Insulation Advocate” which is an open letter to the NIA membership written by the NIA’s Executive Vice-President, Michele Jones.

Committee Days 2013

As many were preparing for the holiday season, NIA was gearing up for one of its most important events of the year: the annual Committee Days meeting. This year’s meeting was held from December 3-4 in Reston, Virginia, and welcomed more than 70 NIA members. Our membership uses this forum to have their respective committee meetings and discuss future objectives and goals for NIA. We were also happy to welcome Congressman Williams of Texas, who spoke during our luncheon presentation to give our members an update on the current political environment.

Congressman Williams is a small business owner, and spoke to members about the crucial role small businesses play in America’s economic strength, and the primary role he believes they will play in the future. After his speech, Congressman Williams took the time to answer questions from our members and discuss their concerns about the country’s future. One of the many benefits of attending the NIA Committee Days meeting is having the opportunity to hear directly from our legislators and a variety of other speakers that may impact our industry. We will continue to facilitate these types of events during this meeting.

Also during the Committee Days meeting, we held a training session sponsored by the Merit and Union Contractor Committees on Effective Customer Contract Negotiations with Cynthia Paul, Managing Director of the FMI Corporation. Attendees were very enthusiastic about this valuable training, finding it well worth their time. Due to the positive feedback we received from our contractor members, we will be publishing some additional materials on negotiating strategies in the January issue of our magazine, Insulation Outlook.

New Mechanical Insulation Awareness Presentation

NIA has developed a new educational tool that will soon be available to our members. We are finalizing an awareness PowerPoint presentation that will help members express the benefits of mechanical insulation to a variety of audiences, including both experts and those with less knowledge about insulation. The presentation will be provided to NIA members as a complimentary

(Continued on page 7)
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member benefit. It can easily be used alongside many of the educational materials we have developed for our membership. If members are looking to add even more value to their presentations, we have also developed a resource kit with a variety of materials including the presentation, NIA's Insulation Materials Specification Guide, industry flyers, the NIA Insulation Sampler, Insulation Outlook magazine issues with articles specifically tailored for your audience, and various other industry materials. For members who want a speaker, we are also offering a package that will provide a NIA presenter to deliver the presentation. We will be releasing more details about these packages soon.

Our association is strongest when we have active participation by our members, and there is no substitution for hearing from those who have been operating businesses and working in the mechanical insulation industry for years. We are very grateful to all the members who made a point to not only attend Committee Days, but also actively share their ideas to grow our association and benefit the industry. We hope we will see all our members at NIA's 2014 Annual Convention in Indian Wells, California, and continue the process of growing and strengthening our industry.

Best Regards,
Michele M. Jones
NIA EVP/CEO

NONRESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION INDEX DROPS IN FOURTH QUARTER

NRCl = 57.4

RALEIGH, N.C. FMI (www.fminet.com), a leading provider of management consulting and investment banking to the engineering and construction industry, announces the release of the 2013 Fourth Quarter Nonresidential Construction Index report. The NRCl shows a 2.9 point drop in the fourth quarter to 57.4. However, the score is still ahead of fourth quarter 2012 by 1.9 points. An NRCl of more than 50 indicates growth, therefore the fourth quarter score still indicates modest improvement in the industry.

One of the reasons cited for the slight decline is the political infighting and uncertainty. Proceeding with caution by investors seems to be the new norm.

Productivity continues to slide. The 48.6 score is at its lowest since the second quarter of 2008. Ultimately, attention to productivity and profit margins will be key to sustaining growth going forward.

Building construction continues to improve since 2012. However, growth is still unsteady as the numbers have slipped 7.5 points to 64.1 this quarter. Material and labor cost also continues to rise causing the overall NRCl to fall.
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ALDRIDGE ELECTRIC CITED BY U.S. LABOR DEPARTMENT'S OSHA AFTER HEAT-RELATED DEATH OF WORKER IN CHICAGO

CHICAGO — The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has cited Aldridge Electric Inc. for one serious safety violation following the June 25 death of a 36-year-old worker who developed heat stroke at a job site in Chicago. The company was installing electrical conduit in an uncovered trench on the Chicago Transit Authority's Dan Ryan Red Line project when the worker became ill on his first day on the job.

"This worker died from heat stress on his first day on the job. This tragedy underscores the need for employers to ensure that new workers become acclimated and build a tolerance to working in excessive heat with a program of water, rest and shade," said Dr. David Michaels, assistant secretary of labor for occupational safety and health. "A worker's first day on the job shouldn't be the last day of their life."

OSHA's investigation found that Aldridge Electric did not implement an adequate and effective heat stress program and failed to ensure a newly employed worker was acclimatized to effects of heat and physical exertion. The worker was carrying heavy electrical conduit piping in nonshaded conditions when he collapsed on the job site. He died from his illness the following day.

The serious violation was cited for failing to implement an adequate and effective heat stress program. A serious violation occurs when there is substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result from a hazard about, which the employer knew or should have known.

Information and resources for workers and employers on heat illness, including how to prevent it and what to do in case of an emergency, are available in English and Spanish at http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html. OSHA also has a free application for mobile devices that enables workers and supervisors to monitor the heat index at their work sites, which can be downloaded at http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/heat_app.html. The application displays a risk level for workers based on the heat index, as well as reminders about protective measures that should be taken at that risk level.

(Continued on page 10)
Proposed penalties total $7,000. Aldridge Electric, based in Libertyville, Ill., is a specialty electrical contractor that employs nearly 750 workers nationwide. The company has 15 business days from receipt of the citations and penalties to comply, request an informal conference with OSHA's area director or contest the findings before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

To ask questions, obtain compliance assistance, file a complaint, or report workplace hospitalizations, fatalities or situations posing imminent danger to workers, the public should call OSHA's toll-free hotline at 800-321-OSHA (6742), or the agency's Calumet City, Ill., office at 708-891-3800.

**STATEMENT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR DR. DAVID MICHAELS ON SENTENCING IN FATAL GUNPOWDER PLANT EXPLOSION**

CONCORD, N.H. – Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels issued the following statement regarding the sentencing of Craig Sanborn in Coös County Court in New Hampshire for manslaughter in connection with the May 2010 explosion at the Black Mag LLC plant, which killed employees Jesse Kennett and Don Kendall while they were manufacturing a gunpowder substitute. Sanborn, who was the company's president, managing member and primary owner, was sentenced to five to 10 years on two counts of manslaughter, to be served consecutively, for a total of 10 to 20 years, and assessed fines of $10,000:

“The disregard for safety cost two workers their lives, and this jury agreed that Craig Sanborn's actions were criminal. Sanborn recklessly ignored basic safety measures that would have protected their lives. His criminal conviction and sentence won't bring these men back to life, but it will keep him from putting workers' lives in peril. And it should drive home to employers this message: Worker safety can never be sacrificed for the benefit of production, and workers' lives are not—and must never be—considered part of the cost of doing business. We categorically reject the false choice between profits and safety”.

“The Labor Department commends the Coös County Attorney's Office for its successful prosecution. We also appreciate the invaluable cooperation of the New Hamp-
shire Department of Safety, specifically the Fire Marshal and the State Police, during our investigation."

Note: OSHA's investigation of the May 2010 explosion at Sanborn's Black Mag gunpowder plant in Colebrook, N.H., resulted in issuance of 16 willful and over 30 serious safety violation citations, along with a $1.2 million penalty to Black Mag. The citations and penalties were affirmed in an agreement that compelled Sanborn to surrender his ATF explosives manufacturing license and barred him from ever again employing workers in any explosives-related business enterprise.

**STARTING JANUARY 13, 2014, BUSINESS TAX FilERS CAN FILE 2013 RETURNS**

The IRS will begin accepting 2013 business tax returns on Monday, Jan. 13, 2014. This start date applies to both electronically-filed and paper-filed returns.

Business returns include any return that posts on the IRS Business Master File (BMF). BMF returns include a variety of income tax and information returns such as Form 1120 filed by corporations, Form 1120S filed by S corporations, Form 1065 filed by partnerships and Form 1041, the return filed by estates and trusts. It also includes various excise and payroll tax returns, such as Form 720, Form 940, Form 941 and Form 2290. The IRS expects to be able to begin processing any of these business returns on Jan. 13.

The Jan. 13 start date does not apply to unincorporated small businesses that report their income on Form 1040. The start date for all 1040 filers is Jan. 31, 2014. Although the IRS encourages these small businesses to begin preparing their returns now, it will not be able to accept these or any other individual returns or begin processing them until Jan. 31. This includes sole proprietors who file a Schedule C, landlords who file a Schedule E and farmers who file a Schedule F.
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FUTURE MICA MEETING DATES


57th Annual Spring Convention — June, 16 — 19, 2014, Eagle Ridge Resort, Galena, Illinois. [Please note that the convention will begin on the Monday after Father’s Day. This slight change in the schedule is the direct result of member feedback to the Board].

Fall 2014 Annual Fall Business Meeting — October 22 & 23, 2014, Embassy Suites Downtown, Omaha, NE.

58th Annual Spring Convention — June, 2015, Under Consideration. Send your suggestions to the MICA office.

MICA MEMBER ADDRESS/INFO. UPDATES

Be sure to inform the MICA office of any changes or corrections to your listing for either the MICA Directory, e-mail correspondence or mailing address. Even if you update your company listing on the MICA website, please inform the MICA office of the changes. We try to be as current as possible with your help.
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Document Finder provides website visitors with documentation by specific product, including technical data sheets and material safety data sheets for North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific.

To access Document Finder, users go to “Products” and select “Product Finder.” They will then see the tab for “Document Finder,” which brings them to a page where they enter a product number. Document Finder displays all available documents related to the product being searched. The user simply clicks the download link to retrieve the desired documents. A quick demonstration video showing how Document Finder makes locating information easy can be viewed at www.tapes.averydennison.com homepage image gallery.

“With Document Finder, we have simplified the process of locating product documentation,” says Holly Billik, Sr. Manager, Global Marketing Communications, Avery Dennison Performance Tapes. “The new tool is a natural evolution of our website’s extensive product information, which visitors can search by industry and application.”

Document Finder is the latest addition to Avery Dennison Performance Tapes’ user-friendly web site. Last year, the company launched the site with robust product search capabilities across 13 adhesive markets. Within just three screens, OEMs, converters, contractors, distributors and end user customers can advance from the home page to a recommended tape or adhesive for their application. The site also offers links to automotive OEM certifications, distributors and sales representatives, and a regional Order Tracking System.

STANDARD MILEAGE RATES FOR 2014

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today issued the 2014 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes.

Beginning on Jan. 1, 2014, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 56 cents per mile for business miles driven
- 23.5 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations

The business, medical, and moving expense rates decrease one-half cent from the 2013 rates. The charitable rate is based on statute.

The standard mileage rate for business is based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile. The rate for medical and moving purposes is based on the variable costs.

Taxpayers always have the option of calculating the actual costs of using their vehicle rather than using the standard mileage rates.

A taxpayer may not use the business standard mileage rate for a vehicle after using any depreciation method under the Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS) or after claiming a Section 179 deduction for that vehicle. In addition, the business standard mileage rate cannot be used for more than four vehicles used simultaneously.

These and other requirements for a taxpayer to use a standard mileage rate to calculate the amount of a deductible business, moving, medical, or charitable expense are in Rev. Proc. 2010-51. Notice 2013-80 contains the standard mileage rates, the amount a taxpayer must use in calculating reductions to basis for depreciation taken under the business standard mileage rate, and the maximum standard automobile cost that a taxpayer may use in computing the allowance under a fixed and variable rate plan.
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OSHA RENEWS ALLIANCE WITH SCAFFOLD AND ACCESS INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION TO PROTECT WORKERS FROM SCAFFOLD HAZARDS

WASHINGTON – The Occupational Safety and Health Administration renewed its alliance with the Scaffold and Access Industry Association to provide information and training to protect the safety and health of workers who use scaffolds and lift equipment. Through the alliance, OSHA and SAIA will work to reduce and prevent fall and caught-in-between hazards and issues related to frame, mast climbing and suspended scaffolds and aerial lift equipment.

"Worker injuries and deaths from scaffolding hazards can be prevented when employers provide training on safe set up and use of equipment," said Assistant Secretary of Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. "By renewing our alliance with SAIA we will expand our outreach to employers and workers and provide important training to protect workers in the scaffold and access industry."

Through the alliance, OSHA and SAIA will focus on reducing and preventing fall and caught-in-between hazards; address potential hazards associated with mast climbing scaffolds, suspended scaffolds, and aerial lift equipment; and emphasize the rights of workers and the responsibilities of employers under the Occupational Safety and Health Act. The alliance members will also use injury and illness data in selected industries to help identify areas of emphasis for alliance awareness and outreach activities.

Founded in 1972, SAIA is a national trade organization that advocates worker safety in the scaffold, aerial lift and access industry worldwide. The organization represents 1,000 member companies that employ more than 200,000 workers.

For more information, visit the OSHA-SAIA Alliance page. The agreement will remain in effect for five years.

Through its Alliance Program, OSHA works with unions, consulates, trade and professional organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, businesses and educational institutions to prevent workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses. The purpose of each alliance is to develop compliance assistance tools and resources and to educate workers and employers about their rights and responsibilities. Alliance Program participants do not receive exemptions from OSHA inspections or any other enforcement benefits. For more information, visit http://www.osha.gov/desp/alliances/index.html.
At its October meeting, the Board of Directors of MICA approved MICA’s operating budget for 2014. In its deliberations, the Board voted a zero increase in the annual membership dues for contractor and associate member firms. Advertising rates for 2014 will remain the same as in 2013 except. The Board is very cognizant of the current state of the economy and wants to keep MICA affordable to all current and prospective members. Annual dues have remained constant for the past two years.

Contractor member annual dues for 2014 are $675.00. The annual dues for associate members is $475.00. The advertising rates have not increased for 2014. Please contact the MICA office for a copy of the 2014 advertising rates. Advertising in the MICA Messenger continues to be an excellent forum to reach the membership on a monthly basis.

The 2014 membership renewal notices have been mailed to the member firms. The advertising contracts will be sent out during the last week in December. We are anticipating 100% renewals and look forward to your continued participation in MICA in 2014.

Remember, as a MICA member, you are entitled to the member discount when purchasing the electronic version or hard copy of the manual. Just go to the “members only” portion of the MICA website (www.micainsulation.org) to get your discount code. Using the code, you will get a $25 savings off the hard copy (regular price $125) and $40 off on the electronic version (regular price $195). The annual subscription renewal fee on the electronic version is $50.

With the new year comes new opportunities to help grow your association. Do you have a prospective member firm that you think would be interested in joining MICA? If so, let us know! Send the contact information to us at mica@micainsulation.org.
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WHISTLEBLOWERS CAN NOW FILE COMPLAINTS ONLINE WITH OSHA

WASHINGTON – Whistleblowers covered by one of 22 statutes administered by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration will now be able to file complaints online. The online form will provide workers who have been retaliated against an additional way to reach out for OSHA assistance online.

"The ability of workers to speak out and exercise their rights without fear of retaliation provides the backbone for some of American workers’ most essential protections," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. "Whistleblower laws protect not only workers, but also the public at large and now workers will have an additional avenue available to file a complaint with OSHA.”

Currently, workers can make complaints to OSHA by filing a written complaint or by calling the agency's 1-800-321-OSHA (6742) number or an OSHA regional or area office. Workers will now be able to electronically submit a whistleblower complaint to OSHA by visiting www.osha.gov/whistleblower/WBComplaint.html.

The new online form prompts the worker to include basic whistleblower complaint information so they can be easily contacted for follow-up. Complaints are automatically routed to the appropriate regional whistleblower investigators. In addition, the complaint form can also be downloaded and submitted to the agency in hard-copy format by fax, mail or hand-delivery. The paper version is identical to the electronic version and requests the same information necessary to initiate a whistleblower investigation.

OSHA enforces the whistleblower provisions of 22 statutes protecting employees who report violations of various securities laws, trucking, airline, nuclear power, pipeline, environmental, rail, public transportation, workplace safety and health, and consumer protection laws. Detailed information on employee whistleblower rights, including fact sheets and instructions on how to submit the form in hard-copy format, is available online at www.whistleblowers.gov.

2014 TAX SEASON TO OPEN JANUARY 31, 2014; E-FILE AND FREE FILE CAN SPEED REFUNDS

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service announced plans to open the 2014 filing season on Jan. 31 and encouraged taxpayers to use e-file or Free File as the fastest way to receive refunds.

The new opening date for individuals to file their 2013 tax returns will allow the IRS adequate time to program and test its tax processing systems. The annual process for updating IRS systems saw significant delays in October following the 16-day federal government closure.

“Our teams have been working hard throughout the fall to prepare for the upcoming tax season,” IRS Acting Commissioner Danny Werfel said. “The late January opening gives us enough time to get things right with our programming, testing and systems validation. It’s a complex process, and our bottom-line goal is to provide a smooth filing and refund process for the nation’s taxpayers.”

The government closure meant the IRS had to change the original opening date from Jan. 21 to Jan. 31, 2014. The 2014 date is one day later than the 2013 filing season opening, which started on Jan. 30, 2013, following January tax law changes made by Congress on Jan. 1 under the American Taxpayer Relief Act (ATRA). The extensive set of ATRA tax changes affected many 2012 tax returns, which led to the late January opening.

The IRS noted that several options are available to help taxpayers prepare for the 2014 tax season and get their refunds as easily as possible. New year-end tax planning information has been added to IRS.gov this week.

In addition, many software companies are expected to begin accepting tax returns in January and hold those returns until the IRS systems open on Jan. 31. More details will be available in January.

The IRS cautioned that it will not process any tax returns before Jan. 31, so there is no advantage to filing on paper before the opening date. Taxpayers will receive their tax refunds much faster by using e-file or Free File with the direct deposit option.

The April 15 tax deadline is set by statute and will remain in place. However, the IRS reminds taxpayers that anyone can request an automatic six-month extension to file their tax return. The request is easily done with Form 4868, which can be filed electronically or on paper.

IRS systems, applications and databases must be updated annually to reflect tax law updates, business process changes and programming updates in time for the start of the filing season.

The October closure came during the peak period for preparing IRS systems for the 2014 filing season. Programming, testing and deployment of more than 50 IRS systems is needed to handle processing of nearly 150 million tax returns. Updating these core systems is a complex, year-round process with the majority of the work beginning in the fall of each year.

About 90 percent of IRS operations were closed during the shutdown, with some major work streams closed entirely during this period, putting the IRS nearly three weeks behind its tight timetable for being ready to start the 2014 filing season. There are additional training, programming and testing demands on IRS systems this year in order to provide additional refund fraud and identity theft detection and prevention.
IRS OFFERS TIPS FOR YEAR-END GIVING

WASHINGTON — Individuals and businesses making contributions to charity should keep in mind several important tax law provisions that have taken effect in recent years. Some of these changes include the following:

Rules for Charitable Contributions of Clothing and Household Items
To be tax-deductible, clothing and household items donated to charity generally must be in good used condition or better. A clothing or household item for which a taxpayer claims a deduction of over $500 does not have to meet this standard if the taxpayer includes a qualified appraisal of the item with the return.

Donors must get a written acknowledgement from the charity for all gifts worth $250 or more that includes, among other things, a description of the items contributed. Household items include furniture, furnishings, electronics, appliances and linens.

Guidelines for Monetary Donations
To deduct any charitable donation of money, regardless of amount, a taxpayer must have a bank record or a written communication from the charity showing the name of the charity and the date and amount of the contribution. Bank records include canceled checks, bank or credit union statements, and credit card statements. Bank or credit union statements should show the name of the charity, the date, and the amount paid. Credit card statements should show the name of the charity, the date, and the transaction posting date.

Donations of money include those made in cash or by check, electronic funds transfer, credit card and payroll deduction. For payroll deductions, the taxpayer should retain a pay stub, a Form W-2 wage statement or other document furnished by the employer showing the total amount withheld for charity, along with the pledge card showing the name of the charity.

These requirements for the deduction of monetary donations do not change the long-standing requirement that a taxpayer obtain an acknowledgment from a charity for each deductible donation (either money or property) of $250 or more. However, one statement containing all of the required information may meet both requirements.

Reminders
To help taxpayers plan their holiday-season and year-end giving, the IRS offers the following additional reminders:

- Check that the organization is eligible. Only donations to eligible organizations are tax-deductible. Exempt Organization Select Check, a searchable online database available on IRS.gov, lists most organizations that are eligible to receive deductible contributions. In addition, churches, synagogues, temples, mosques and government agencies are eligible to receive deductible donations, even if they are not listed in the database.

- For individuals, only taxpayers who itemize their deductions on Form 1040 Schedule A can claim deductions for charitable contributions. This deduction is not available to individuals who choose the standard deduction, including anyone who files a short form (Form 1040A or 1040EZ). A taxpayer will have a tax savings only if the total itemized deductions (mortgage interest, charitable contributions, state and local taxes, etc.) exceed the standard deduction. Use the 2013 Form 1040 Schedule A to determine whether itemizing is better than claiming the standard deduction.

- For all donations of property, including clothing and household items, get from the charity, if possible, a receipt that includes the name of the charity, date of the contribution, and a reasonably detailed description of the donated property. If a donation is left at a charity’s unattended drop site, keep a written record of the donation that includes this information, as well as the fair market value of the property at the time of the donation and the method used to determine that value. Additional rules apply for a contribution of $250 or more.

- The deduction for a car, boat or airplane donated to charity is usually limited to the gross proceeds from its sale. This rule applies if the claimed value is more than $500. Form 1098-C or a similar statement, must be provided to the donor by the organization and attached to the donor’s tax return.

- If the amount of a taxpayer’s deduction for all noncash contributions is over $500, a properly-completed Form 8283 must be submitted with the tax return.

- And, as always it’s important to keep good records and receipts.
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