



Goats ate my accounts and other excuses

All companies, no matter what size, public or private, trading or non-trading must send accounts and reports to Companies House every year. Back in 1992 late filing penalties were introduced - if a company submits its accounts late then an automatic penalty is imposed.

Fines for private companies start from £150 for less than one month late and go up in increments until they reach £1,500 for over six months late. Public companies' fines are higher starting at £750 for less than one month late, reaching £7,500 if more than six months late.

The information is required for the public record and this is why the late filing penalties were first introduced - to encourage company directors to file on time. Failure to pay the penalty can result in enforcement proceedings. It is a criminal offence not to file the information required and can result in directors being fined personally in the criminal courts.

On a lighter note Companies House has recently published a list of bizarre excuses from companies for the late filing of their statutory accounts.

They include:

- goats ate my accounts
- pirates stole my accounts
- we delivered the accounts to the betting office next door to Companies House
- a volcano erupted and prevented me from filing
- slugs ate my accounts
- it was Valentine's Day
- my company was more successful than I thought it would be, so I was too busy to file

Obviously these appeals were swiftly quashed and although it is possible to appeal against a penalty, the circumstances must be exceptional. This may be due to, for example, an unforeseen catastrophe such as a fire or flood destroying records just before the filing deadline. Excuses such as the inability to pay; the company was dormant; the company's accountant was ill or unreliable; it was the company's first accounts; the directors live or were travelling overseas; it was another director's responsibility to prepare the accounts or the accounts were delayed or lost in the post would not be considered.

The easiest way for a company to avoid a late filing penalty in the first place is to file its accounts and records on time. If they are being prepared by an accountant then all

information needs to be given to them in plenty of time to get the accounts prepared before the deadline.

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