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Updated Interest Rates

Tax, VAT, Fringe Benefits, Loans,
Donations Tax and Dividends Tax

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Tax and VAT – Interest Rate Decreases

The SARS interest rates have been sharply decreased as detailed below.

It is important to remember that interest and penalties paid to SARS are not deductible expenses for income tax purposes. On the other hand, interest received from SARS is fully taxable (after deducting the current initial exemption of R23 800 per annum (R34 500 if you are 65 or older) for all local interest income earned by natural persons).

- **Income Tax, Provisional Tax, Dividends Tax, etc**

Payable to SARS on short payments of all such taxes (other than VAT): 9.75% per annum from 1 May 2020 (was 10% per annum with effect from 1 November 2019).

Payable by SARS on refunds of tax (where interest is applicable): 5.75% per annum from 1 May 2020 (was 6% per annum with effect from 1 November 2019).

If the refund is made after a successful tax appeal or where the appeal is conceded by SARS, the interest rate is 9.75% per annum from 1 May 2020 (was 10% per annum from 1 November 2019).

- **VAT**

Payable to SARS on late payments: 9.75% per annum from 1 May 2020 (was 10% p.a. from 1 November 2019).

Payable by SARS on VAT refunds after prescribed period: 9.75% per annum from 1 May 2020 (was 10% from 1 November 2019).

- **Fringe Benefits**

Official interest rate for loans to employees below which a deemed fringe benefit arises: 7.25% per annum from 1 February 2020 (was 7.50% per annum from 1 August 2019). See below for details.

- **Dividends Tax**

Official interest rate for loans (designated in Rands) to shareholders below which the interest on such loans can be deemed to be dividends on which Dividends Tax is payable: 5.25% per annum from 1 May 2020 (was 6.25% per annum from 1 April 2020). See below for details.

- **Donations Tax**

Loans to Trusts by natural connected persons with interest charged at rates below the official rate create a donation subject to donations tax at 20%. Contact us for more details.

- **Penalties**

The amount of penalties for late payments (where applicable) are substantial (at least 10%) and are in addition to interest charged.

Fringe Benefits, Loans, Donations Tax and Dividends Tax – Interest Rates

- If inadequate interest is charged to an employee (including working directors) on loans (other than for the purpose of furthering his own studies) in excess of R3 000 from his employer (or associated institution), tax on the fringe benefit may be payable.

Unless interest is charged at the “official” rate or greater, the employee is deemed to have received a taxable fringe benefit calculated as being the difference between the interest actually charged and interest calculated at the “official” rate.

For employees’ tax purposes, the tax deduction must be made whenever interest is payable. If not regularly, then on a monthly basis for monthly paid employees, weekly for weekly paid employees, etc.

- Subject to a number of exceptions, distributions of income and capital gains from a company / close corporation are normally subject to Dividends Tax at the flat rate of 20%. Loans or advances to or for the benefit of a shareholder / member will be deemed to be dividends but only to the extent that interest at less than the “official” rate (or market related rate in the case of foreign currency loans) is payable on the loan or fringe benefits tax is payable on an interest free (or subsidized interest) loan to an employee.

It is not the amount of the loan but the interest reduction which is deemed to be a dividend. Low interest loans are accordingly subject to Dividends Tax payable by the company and only in respect of the interest benefit.

- Loans to Trusts by natural connected persons with interest charged below the official rate create a donation subject to donations tax at 20%. Contact us for more details.
- With effect from 1 March 2011, the official rate has been defined as the rate of interest equal to the South African “repo rate” plus 1%. For foreign currency loans, the rate is the equivalent of the foreign “repo rate” plus 1%. The South African repo rate is currently 4.25% p.a.

The “official” rate of interest over the past 5 years

With effect from 1 February 2016	- 7.75% p.a.
With effect from 1 April 2016	- 8.00% p.a.
With effect from 1 August 2017	- 7.75% p.a.
With effect from 1 April 2018	- 7.50% p.a.
With effect from 1 December 2018	- 7.75% p.a.
With effect from 1 August 2019	- 7.50% p.a.
With effect from 1 February 2020	- 7.25% p.a.
With effect from 1 April 2020	- 6.25% p.a.
With effect from 1 May 2020	- 5.25% p.a.



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