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**Center for Medicare & Medicaid Delays Ban on  
Faxed Prescriptions**  
*Deadline Moved to Jan. 1, 2012*

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Physicians who participate in Medicare and depend on computer-generated faxes to transmit prescriptions to pharmacies can breathe a collective sigh of relief. CMS has extended its deadline for banning faxed prescriptions by three years, moving the Jan. 1, 2009, deadline to Jan. 1, 2012.

The deadline change is included in the 2009 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule final rule announced by CMS on Oct. 30. According to [CMS' press release](#), the agency reversed its position "in the interest of patient care and safety and to encourage prescribers and dispensers to adopt e-prescribing."

**AAFP PUSHED FOR EXTENDED DEADLINE**

Steven Waldren, M.D., director of the Academy's Center for Health Information Technology, said the Academy supported changing the Jan. 1, 2009, deadline on faxed prescriptions.

"The Academy's position was that the 2009 deadline would force some physicians to move backward in their efforts to accomplish e-prescribing," said Waldren. He explained that although many physicians initiate prescriptions through their electronic health record, or EHR, systems, their computers actually generate a fax to the pharmacy.

Had the deadline been imposed on Jan. 1 of next year, "those physicians would have reverted back to paper-based prescriptions," said Waldren.

Having three additional years to transition to true e-prescribing will benefit many physicians, but Waldren cautioned family physicians to stay focused on implementing e-prescribing technology.

E-prescribing offers proven benefits to physicians, including reductions in medication errors, a reduced call burden from pharmacies and electronic access to formulary information. And patients appreciate the convenience, said Waldren.

"But physicians should also keep in mind the new CMS e-prescribing incentive program, as well as the CMS penalties that start in 2013," he added.

As reported by [AAFP News Now in July](#), the government's new e-prescribing program allows for prescriber bonus payments for four consecutive years beginning in 2009. In 2014, CMS will begin reducing Medicare payments to physicians and other prescribers who have not adopted e-prescribing.

**REVIEW FINAL RULE**

The entire 2009 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule final rule will appear in the Nov. 19 *Federal Register*.

Physicians wanting a sneak peek can access the [1,459-page document](#) from CMS' Web site. Click on "CMS-1403-FC" under "Downloads" and accept the CMS disclaimer for access to the rule.

Comments on the rule are due to CMS by 5 p.m. ET on Dec. 29. The AAFP will submit its official comments to CMS in December.

