# **Authenticated Filer Application Instructions**

# Filing Search Guide

**D00.17** 

February 25, 2021

FOR THE

# ERISA Filing Acceptance System 2 (EFAST2)



PREPARED FOR:
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
CONTRACT NO. HHSN316201200023W

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# **Table of Contents**

Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Chapter 2. EFAST2 Filing Search	1
2.1 Overview	
2.2 EFAST2 Website	2
Chapter 3. Search – Form 5500 Series	3
3.1 Searching for Filings	
3.2 Search Results	
3.3 Access Filings or Components	5
3.4 Batch Multiple Filings or Components	6
3.5 Forms and Schedules in PDF Format	
3.6 View/Print Search Results	9
Chapter 4. Search – Form PR	10
4.1 Searching for Filings	
4.2 Search Results	
Chapter 5. Troubleshooting	13
5.1 Problems Downloading a File?	
5.2 On-screen Messages	13
Chapter 6. Support	14
Chapter 7. Acronyms	15

# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

The Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and provisions of the Internal Revenue Code generally requires the administrator of an employee benefit plan to submit an annual report (the Form 5500 series) describing the plan's financial status and operations. The Form 5500 series is sponsored by multiple federal agencies that work together to enforce ERISA provisions and other statutes designed to protect the retirement benefits of the nation's workers. Form 5500 filings are the principal source of information for the Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA), Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and Pension Benefits Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) concerning the operations, funding, and investments of more than 800,000 pension and welfare benefit plans. This information is essential to the three agencies' enforcement of ERISA and policy formulation programs, and is important for other federal agencies, Congress, and the private sector in assessing employee benefit, tax, and economic trends and policies.

The Form PR (pooled plan provider registration) is used to report information for a person or entity that intends to serve as a pooled plan provider to pooled employer plans within the meaning of sections 3(43) and 3(44) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and section 413(e) of the Internal Revenue Code (the Code). See 29 CFR 2510.3-44.

EFAST2 (ERISA Filing Acceptance System II) is a system designed by the Department of Labor, Internal Revenue Service, and Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation to simplify and expedite the submission, receipt, and processing of the Form 5500 Series and Form PR filings.

This guide is intended to provide the information and instructions necessary for users to query and retrieve information about filings using the EFAST2 Filing Search application.

# **Chapter 2. EFAST2 Filing Search**

#### 2.1 Overview

The EFAST2 Filing Search application can be used by both registered and non-registered users to query for and view Form 5500 Series and Form PR. EFAST2 registration is not required to use the Filing Search application. However, searches may include additional results based on whether an authenticated (logged in) user has certain permissions, such as a Government user, or for certain Form PR results that have been updated after the initial filing was submitted.

The Filing Search application is web-based and requires no software installation on the computer. It does, however, require an active internet connection that supports Secure Socket Layer (SSL) encryption and an internet browser such as Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Edge and Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, or Apple Safari. The filing will be displayed in a Portable Document Format (PDF), which will require a PDF viewer application.

Users may search for filings and view filings and/or the filing components via the EFAST2 Filing Search application on the EFAST2 website. To view a filing, users will need to enter the criteria to be used for searching the EFAST2 database. The system will then retrieve all filings the user is allowed to view that meet the specified criteria and present the results in list form. The user may then select one or more filings for viewing and/or saving. These filings may be viewed and/or saved in their entirety or the user may select one or more components of the filing to view and/or save. Filing components consist of the Form 5500, 5500-SF, 5500-EZ, individual schedules, attachments, and Form PR.

All successfully submitted filings are stored electronically and may be retrieved and viewed through the EFAST2 Filing Search application with the following exceptions:

- Filings containing sensitive information (e.g. Social Security Number, financial information, etc.).
- Filings for plan years prior to 2009.
- One-participant and foreign plans.
- Filings identified as amendments and linked to their parent filing.
- Prior year filings submitted on a current form year.

The filings retrieved by the Filing Search application include all the components of the filing: Form, Schedules, and Attachments. These components may be viewed jointly or individually.

#### 2.2 EFAST2 Website

The EFAST2 Filing Search application is located at https://www.efast.dol.gov.

The Welcome page contains links to login, register, search for filings, and access New and Noteworthy information.

The navigation menu at the top of the page contains options that include Filing Search. For users that are logged in, the menu options may vary based on the user types in the user's Profile. The Help menu contains links to filing-related information and to the Contact Us page.

Other EFAST2 and Government links are located at the bottom of the page, including links to Department of Labor and Employee Benefit Security Administration (EBSA), IRS, PBGC, About EFAST2, Related Resources, Privacy & Security Statement, and Office of the Inspector General.

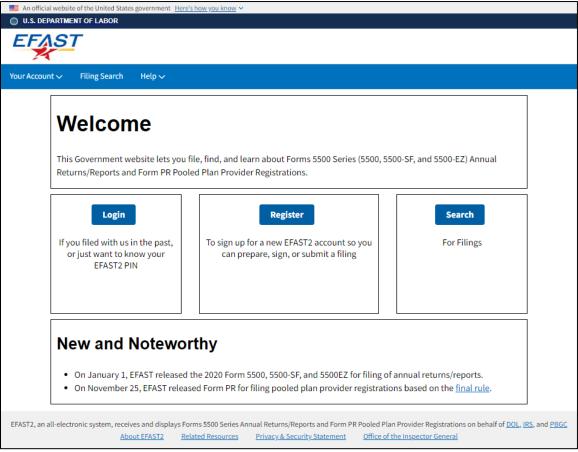


Figure 1. EFAST2 Welcome Page

# Chapter 3. Search - Form 5500 Series

The Filing Search application is located at <a href="https://www.efast.dol.gov">https://www.efast.dol.gov</a>. Click **Filing Search** from the navigation menu.

## 3.1 Searching for Filings

The filing search tool retrieves publicly available Form 5500 Series or Form PR filings. Choose which type of filing you want to find in the **Search Type** field.

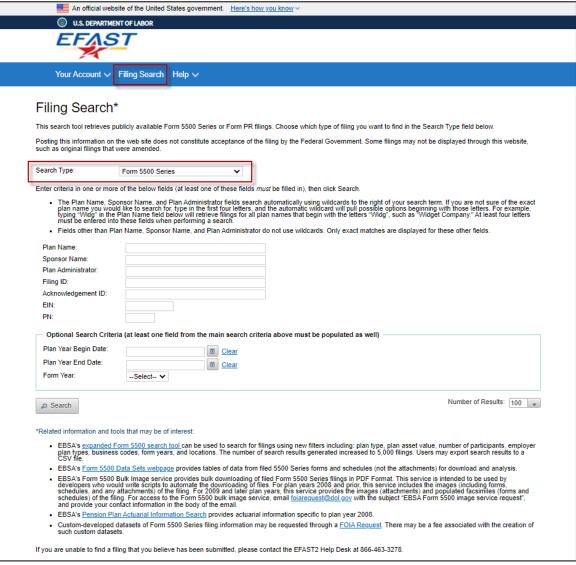


Figure 2. Filing Search – Form 5500 Series

Enter criteria in one or more of the fields (at least one of the fields must be filled in), then click **Search**.

The Plan Name, Sponsor Name, and Plan Administrator fields search automatically using wildcards to the right of your search term. If you are not sure of the exact plan name you would like to search for, type in the first four letters, and the automatic wildcard will pull possible options beginning with those letters. For example, typing "Widg" in the Plan Name field below will retrieve filings for all plan names that begin with the letters "Widg", such as "Widget Company." At least four letters must be entered into these fields when performing a search.

Fields other than Plan Name, Sponsor Name, and Plan Administrator do not use wildcards. Only exact matches are displayed for these other fields.

- **Plan Name**: The Plan name field is limited to 140 characters. Allowable characters include unaccented letters, numbers, hash, hyphen, slash, comma, period, parentheses, ampersand, apostrophe and single space. Leading space, trailing space, adjacent spaces, and other symbols are invalid.
- **Sponsor Name**: The Sponsor Name field is limited to 70 characters. Allowed characters are letters, numbers, apostrophes, commas, periods, hyphens, slash, ampersand, percent, or single space. Other symbols, leading space, trailing space, or multiple adjacent spaces are invalid.
- **Plan Administrator**: The Plan Administrator Name field is limited to 70 characters. Allowed characters are letters, numbers, apostrophes, commas, periods, hyphens, slash, ampersand, percent, or single space. Other symbols, leading space, trailing space, or multiple adjacent spaces are invalid.
- **Filing ID:** Filing ID is a number created by the filing preparation software that is received by the EFAST2 system as filing data. The Filing ID may be either 21-digit number or 36 alpha-numeric characters.
- Acknowledgement ID: Acknowledgement ID (AckID) is a number created by the EFAST2 system to acknowledge receipt of a filing. The Acknowledgement ID is a unique 30 character number. Allowable characters include letters and numbers.
- **EIN:** Employer Identification Number. The EIN must be a 9 digit number starting with a predefined 2 digit IRS District Office code. The EIN can be used separately or together with the Plan Number (PN).
- **PN:** Plan Number of the filing. The EIN is required for search with PN. The Plan number field must be a 3-digit number between 001 and 999. Leading zeroes are required.

Optionally, enter criteria in one of more of the following fields (none of these fields are required).

- Plan Year Begin Date: Click the Calendar icon and choose a Plan Year begin date from the calendar.
- Plan Year End Date: Click the Calendar icon and choose a Plan Year end date from the calendar.
- Form Year: This field will contain a dropdown list of all active form years. Valid values for the field include a 4-digit year valid for the current processing year.

From the drop down menu, select the maximum *Number of Results* you want to retrieve. A minimum of 100 (default) and a maximum of 1,000 may be chosen from the list. If more results are found than the selected number, an error will indicate to modify the search by selecting a larger number of results or refining the search criteria to select a smaller set of data.

After entering search criteria and selecting the number of results to receive, click the **Search** button. If your search criteria does not match any filings, check your entries or reduce the number of criteria and try again.

Related information and tools that may be of interest:

- EBSA's <u>expanded Form 5500 search tool</u> can be used to search for filings using new filters including: plan type, plan asset value, number of participants, employer plan types, business codes, form years, and locations. The number of search results generated increased to 5,000 filings. Users may export search results to a CSV file.
- EBSA's Form 5500 Data Sets webpage provides tables of data from filed 5500 Series forms and schedules (not the attachments) for download and analysis.
- EBSA's Form 5500 Bulk Image service provides bulk downloading of filed Form 5500 Series filings in PDF Format. This service is intended to be used by developers who would write scripts to automate the downloading of files. For plan years 2008 and prior, this service includes the images (including forms, schedules, and any attachments) of the filing. For 2009 and later plan years, this service provides the images (attachments) and populated facsimiles (forms and schedules) of the filing. For access to the Form 5500 bulk image service, email <a href="mailto:foiarequest@dol.gov">foiarequest@dol.gov</a> with the subject "EBSA Form 5500 image service request", and provide your contact information in the body of the email.
- EBSA's Pension Plan Actuarial Information Search provides actuarial information specific to plan year 2008.
- Custom-developed datasets of Form 5500 Series filing information may be requested through a <u>FOIA Request</u>. There may be a fee associated with the creation of such custom datasets.

#### 3.2 Search Results

The search results will be listed in ascending order by EIN, then in ascending order by PN, and finally in descending order by Received date.

The columns displayed are EIN, PN, Plan Year End, Received Date, Plan Name, Ack ID, and Download. The Download column is the last column after scrolling to the right.

The number of filings found will be listed in the lower right corner.

If necessary, click Edit Search Criteria in the upper right corner to return to the Filing Search criteria page.

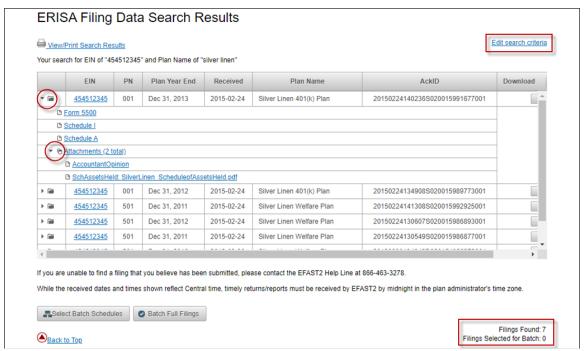


Figure 3. Form 5500 Series - Search Results

# 3.3 Access Filings or Components

From the **ERISA Filing Data Search Results** page, you may open or save an individual filing or a component of a filing in PDF format. EFAST2 recommends turning off web browser pop-up blockers when using the EFAST2 website.

- 1. Click the arrow to the left of the filing to expand the list of filing components (e.g., Form, Schedule, Attachments).
- 2. Click the link for the filing or component to open or save in PDF format.
  - a. To view the entire filing (including schedules and attachments) in a single PDF, click the EIN link.
  - b. To view a single component (form, schedule, or attachment), click the arrow to the left of the EIN to open the folder contents. Click the form, schedule, or attachment name link to open it in an individual PDF.
- 3. A File Download dialog box should prompt you to open the file, save the file to the user's computer, or cancel the download, depending on the type and version of the browser being used.
  - a. Click **Open** to view the PDF using software such as Adobe Reader. The software must already be installed on the computer. If a single filing component was clicked, that component is displayed in the PDF. If an entire filing was clicked, all filing components are displayed in one PDF, starting with the Form, and then Schedules (in alphabetical order) followed by attachments (if present).
  - b. Click **Save** and then select a location on your computer to save the file. Enter a descriptive file name when saving the file; the default file name is "filing.pdf". After saving, some web browsers may ask if you wish to open the file or the folder in which you saved the file.

#### Attachment(s) Under Review

The Government reviews filing attachments for sensitive personally identifiable information. During the review process, the electronic form and schedule filing data is viewable, and the attachment will be marked as "Under Review" (see section 3.3.4).



Figure 4. Attachment(s) Under Review

If the Government determines that an attachment contains no sensitive personally identifiable information, the "Under Review" message will be removed and the attachment will be disclosed when viewing the filing or individual filing component.

If the Government determines that an attachment may contain sensitive personally identifiable information, the attachment will not be disclosed. However, the remaining filing data and other attachments (if any) will be accessible.

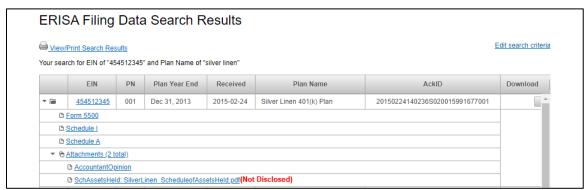


Figure 5. Attachment Not Disclosed

## 3.4 Batch Multiple Filings or Components

Batched filings and form/schedule components are downloaded as a compressed zip file.

From the **ERISA Filing Data Search Results** page, check the **Download** box for each you wish to add to the batch. You must select at least one but no more than 100 filings for batching. After selecting filings, click the option to **Batch Schedules** (to select individual filing components to batch) or **Batch Full Filings** (to batch all components of the selected filings).

#### **Batch Full Filings**

To batch full filings (all components) into one compressed file:

- 1. Select one or more filings by clicking the check box in the **Download** column at the end of the row of columns.
- 2. After filings have been selected, click the **Batch Full Filings** button.
- 3. The File Download dialog box should prompt to open the file, save the file to the computer, or cancel the download.
  - a. Click **Open** to open the file using software on the computer that can read files with a ".zip" file extension. The software must already be installed on the computer.
  - b. Click **Save** to select a location on your computer to save the file. After saving, some web browsers may ask if you wish to open the file or the folder in which you saved the file

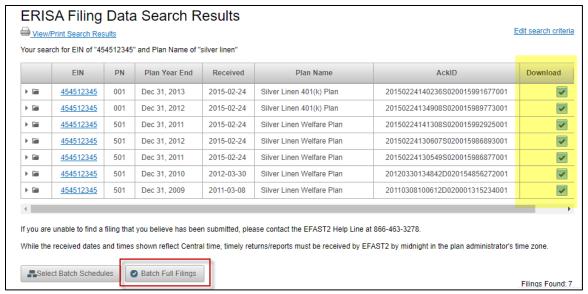


Figure 6. Select Files to Batch

#### **Batch Select Filing Components**

To batch only selected components of filings:

- 1. Select one or more filings by clicking the check box in the **Download** column at the end of the row of columns.
- 2. After filings have been selected, click the **Select Batch Schedules** button.
- 3. Select one or more components to batch. The listed components are comprised of any filing component found in any of the selected filings. Not all of the selected filings will contain each of the listed components that are available to batch. For example, options include selecting to *Batch Form 5500*, which would batch only the Form 5500 components from the selected filings, or to *Batch Schedule I* to batch only Schedule I components from the filings.
- 4. Click the **Generate Batch PDF** button. **Batch Whole Filing** has the same effect as **Batch Full Filings** from the previous page.
- 5. The File Download dialog box should prompt to open the file, save the file to the computer, or cancel the download.
- 6. The zipped file will contain a separate PDF file of each filing, containing only the filing components that were selected.

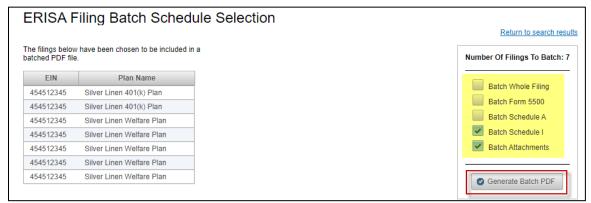


Figure 7. Select Filing Components to Batch

# **Zipped Batch Files**

Locate the saved zip file (or click Open from the Open or Save options). Clicking to open the file will launch the software on your computer that is used for zipping/unzipping compressed files (e.g., 7-Zip, WinZip, etc.). Once the software has opened the zip file, you may extract the individual contents to save them in another folder on your computer or to view them immediately.

#### 3.5 Forms and Schedules in PDF Format

The forms and schedules are presented in PDF format. If a single filing component was clicked, that component is displayed in the PDF. If an entire filing was clicked, all filing components are displayed in one PDF, starting with the Form, and then Schedules (in alphabetical order) followed by attachments (if present).

# Attachment(s) Under Review or Not Disclosed

While attachments are under review for sensitive personally identifiable information, an "Attachment(s) Under Review" placeholder will be included at the end of the PDF of the entire filing and will temporarily replace the viewing of attachments.

Once the Government has determined that an attachment contains no sensitive personally identifiable information, the placeholder will be removed and the attachment will be disclosed when viewing the filing or individual filing component.

If it is determined that an attachment may contain sensitive personally identifiable information, the attachment will not be disclosed. The blocked attachment will be replaced with a message to indicate that the attachment cannot be publicly disclosed.

#### **Print Filing**

Once a filing has been retrieved and displayed, you may print it using your PDF reader application's print function. A commonly used PDF reader is Adobe Reader. The following is an example of printing a PDF. Your options will vary depending upon the operating system in use, and the software and printer setups that are available to you.

To print in Adobe Reader, select the printer icon on the toolbar, or go to the File menu and click Print. After selecting Print, the Print dialog box will open. Select a printer and click OK to print.

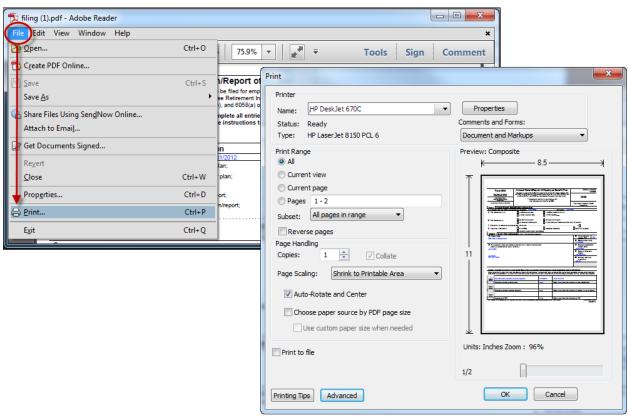


Figure 8. Example of Print Option (Adobe Reader)

#### 3.6 View/Print Search Results

The filing search results list can be opened in PDF, saved, or printed by clicking the **View/Print Search Results** link at the top of the **ERISA Filing Data Search Results** page.

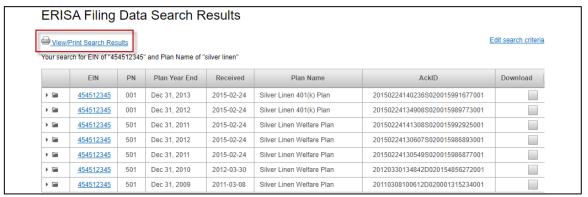


Figure 9. View/Print Search Results

The PDF of the search results will list the filings and components (schedules and attachments) for each filing in the search results list in the same order as displayed. The columns listed on the PDF include EIN, PN, Plan Year End, Received Timestamp, Plan Name, and AckID.

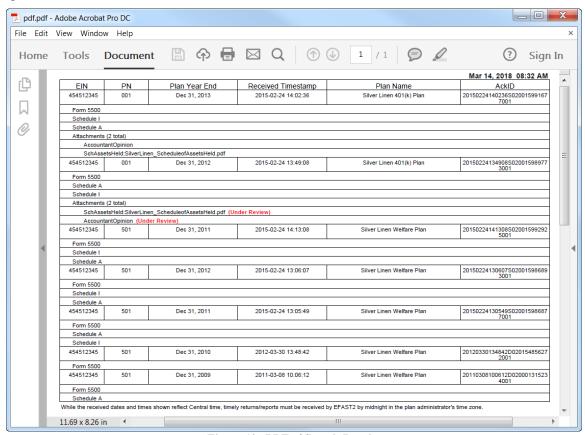


Figure 10. PDF of Search Results

# Chapter 4. Search - Form PR

The Filing Search application is located at https://www.efast.dol.gov. Click Filing Search from the navigation menu.

## 4.1 Searching for Filings

The filing search tool retrieves publicly available Form 5500 Series or Form PR filings. Choose which type of filing you want to find in the **Search Type** field.

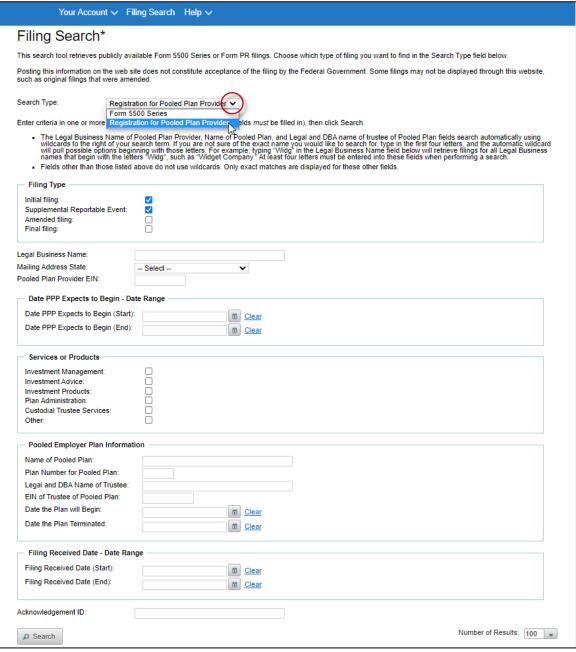


Figure 11. Filing Search - Form PR

Enter criteria in one or more of the fields (at least one of the fields *must* be used), and then click **Search**.

The Legal Business Name, Name of Pooled Plan, and Legal and DBA Name of Trustee fields search automatically using wildcards to the right of your search term. If you are not sure of the exact name you would like to search, type in the first four letters (minimum), and the automatic wildcard will pull possible options beginning with those letters.

Fields other than those listed above do not use wildcards. Only exact matches are displayed for these other fields.

- Filing Type: Initial filing, Supplemental Reportable Event, Amended filing, Final Filing
- Legal Business Name
- Mailing Address State (drop down menu)
- Pooled Plan Provider EIN
- Date PPP Expects to Begin Date Range: Date PPP Expects to Begin (Start), Date PPP Expects to Begin (End)
- Services or Products: Investment Management, Investment Advice, Investment Products, Plan Administration, Custodial Trustee Services, Other
- **Pooled Employer Plan Information:** Name of Pooled Plan, Plan Number for Pooled Plan, Legal and DBA Name of Trustee, EIN of Trustee of Pooled Plan, Date the Plan will Begin, Date the Plan Terminated
- Filing Received Date Date Range: Filing Received Date (Start), Filing Received Date (End)
- Acknowledgement ID ID created by IFILE after a Form PR has been submitted

The **Show Latest Version** check box is an option for authenticated users who are logged in to the EFAST2 website while using the Filing Search page. Using this check box limits the results to the most recent version if more than one filing are found for the same pooled plan provider registration (e.g., initial, supplemental, amended, or final filings).

#### 4.2 Search Results

The search results will be listed in alphabetical order. For unauthenticated users who are not logged in, the most recent filing version (e.g., initial, supplemental, amended, or final) will be displayed for each search result in the list. For authenticated users who are logged in, the list will either show all filings, or the most recent version, depending on the **Show Latest Version** check box on the **Filing Search** page.

Certain Form PR results may not be searchable if blocked from public access by the Government.

The columns displayed on the Pooled Plan Provider Registrations search results page are Legal Business Name, PPP EIN, Received Date, Acknowledgement ID (AckID), and Download.

#### View Form PR

Click the link for the Legal Business Name of the Form PR you wish to open. The file will open or download to your computer, depending on your web browser.

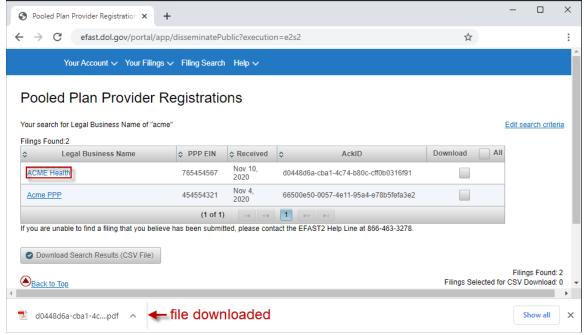


Figure 12. Form PR Search Results

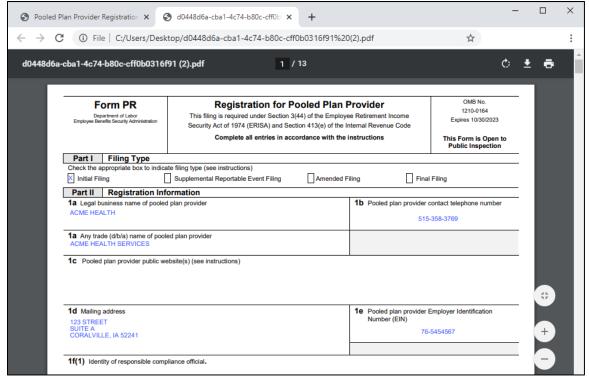


Figure 13. Form PR - View File

#### **Download Search Results (CSV File)**

Check the **Download** box(es) for the Form PR file(s) that you wish to download in CSV (comma separated value) format. You must select at least one but no more than 100 filings. If you select the **Download All** for more than 100 filings, an error will indicate to reduce the selection to less than or equal to 100 and try again.

The selected search results open as an Excel or similar spreadsheet with default column widths and row heights. For repeating fields on the Form PR, such as Line 7 (list of Pooled Employer Plan Information), expand the row height to see all entries, and expand the column width to make it easier to read. Depending on the software, it may be possible to use "AutoFit Row Height" and/or "AutoFit Column Width" from the cell formatting menu.



Figure 14. Form PR - Download Search Results

# **Chapter 5. Troubleshooting**

# 5.1 Problems Downloading a File?

Depending on your browser settings, you may encounter difficulties downloading files because they are blocked. For example, in Internet Explorer, you may receive a message that says to help protect your security; Internet Explorer blocked the site from downloading files to your computer.

To download the file:

- 1. Click the information bar at the top or bottom of the browser for options.
- 2. You will be prompted to allow downloading the file (Download File...), find out what the risk is to allowing the download (What's the Risk?), or get more information about the Information Bar (More Information). Click the *Download File...* option to allow the file to download. If the download does not begin immediately, click the link again to request the download.

# 5.2 On-screen Messages

The EFAST2 Filing Search application is designed to help the user when there are problems with entry of data or performing actions. There are messages that will appear if problems are encountered or if the system is processing information.

**Progress Window.** This message appears while the system is searching for filings, when retrieving a filing to view, or when batching filings or filing components. The message closes when the process is completed.

**Informational Messages.** These are messages that appear either on the upper part of the screen or next to a field when an action is required. They are highlighted in yellow and have an alert icon next to the text.

Example: Your search criteria did not match any filings. Please double-check your entries and try again.

**Error Messages.** These messages also appear in the upper part of the screen when an action is required. The message will reference the error and action will be necessary to proceed. The message will disappear once the problem has been fixed. Error messages have a warning icon next to the text and are highlighted in red along with the field in error.

#### Examples:

- The following error(s) have occurred: You must enter at least 4 characters for Plan Name. Please try again.
- You have selected too many filings to be downloaded. Please reduce your selection to less than or equal to 100 and try again.

# **Chapter 6. Support**

Assistance is available for filers by telephone, email, and web-form.

• Live Customer Service: 866-463-3278 (866-GO EFAST)

Email: <a href="mailto:support@efast.dol.gov">support@efast.dol.gov</a>
 Online: <a href="https://www.efast.dol.gov">https://www.efast.dol.gov</a>

• EFAST2 Publications: https://www.efast.dol.gov/fip/publications.html

Hours of operation for live customer service are from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, except for Federal Holidays (excluding Columbus Day). Voicemail, email, and web-form requests may be submitted at any time and will be answered during regular business hours.

The following is the Federal Holiday Schedule:

- 1. New Year's Day
- 2. Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- 3. President's Day
- 4. Memorial Day
- 5. Independence Day
- 6. Labor Day
- 7. Veterans' Day
- 8. Thanksgiving Day
- 9. Christmas Day

# **Chapter 7. Acronyms**

DOL Department of Labor

EBSA Employee Benefits Security Administration

EFAST2 ERISA Filing Acceptance System 2

EIN Employer Identification Number

ERISA Employee Retirement Income Security Act

IFILE Internet Based Filing Application

PDF Portable Document Format

PN Plan Number

SSL Secure Sockets Layer