

COOK COUNTY PROPERTY TAXES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Why is the amount due on the second installment higher (or lower) than the first installment?

Because of the large number of tax parcels that exist in Cook County, the property tax process and determining the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) for computing property taxes takes considerable time and the EAV is typically not available sufficiently early enough to allow for the County to compute the total taxes and providing two equal installments as occurs in most other counties in Illinois (including neighboring Will County). To compensate for this timing issue, in Cook County, the first installment always is determined as an estimate based on the total taxes paid in the prior year. From tax year 2009 forward the first installment bill has been computed at 55 percent of the prior year total tax (prior years were computed at 50 percent). Increasing the percentage has helped to make the two Cook County tax installments more equal, similar to what occurs in other counties.

It seems like we just paid a property tax bill a few months ago. Why are we being requested to pay again so soon?

Cook County issues property tax bills in two installments. Unlike other counties in Illinois, the schedule of issuance and due dates of the two installment bills is not fixed and uniform from year to year. Likewise, the amounts due will vary between the two installments.

In Cook County, the first installment is normally mailed at the end of January (Feb. 1) with a March 1 due date. The second installment for a tax year is issued after the property values (EAV) have been finalized for that tax year, which is necessary to determine the tax rates and produce the tax bills. The second installment bill will reflect the total tax computed for the year, minus the amount due/paid with the first installment estimate.

It is a little-known fact that the dates for mailing the Cook County first and second installment are set by Illinois Statute (35 ILCS 200/21-30). Under the statute, the first installment bills are to be mailed by the end of January, and the second installment bills are to be mailed by the end of June. However, the second installment tax bills have frequently been delayed due to the unavailability of the final Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV). As a result, the Cook County second installment tax bills have been frequently issued with a due date ranging from September through November, and occasionally as late as December. The consecutive nine-year period from tax year 2011 through 2019 are the only years where the second installment tax bill was mailed meeting the statutory timetable in over seven decades. Prior to this, the last time the tax bills had been issued in accordance with the statutory guidance was tax year 1977. Tax year 2021 marks the latest due date (12/30/2022) on record and just barely kept the annual property tax cycle within a single calendar year. Due to the extreme delay that occurred with tax year 2021, the Cook County first installment for tax year 2022 (payable in 2023) was pushed back a month from its normal issuance and due dates.

My tax bill does not reflect my Homeowner’s Exemption(s). What can I do?

An owner-occupied primary residence is eligible for a General homestead exemption. The owner of such residence that is 65 years of age or older within the TAX year is also eligible for the Senior Citizen homestead exemption. There are additional exemptions applicable to Veterans and Persons with Disabilities. You can visit the Assessor’s website at [Property Tax Exemptions | Cook County Assessor's Office](#) for more information on exemptions and the related forms.

Just above the payment coupon, is a box under the heading “Tax Calculator” that shows how your tax bill was determined. If any of the lines for exemptions (right column) show “.00” you did not receive benefit of that exemption. If you think you are entitled to one of these exemptions, you should contact or visit one of the Cook County Assessor offices (downtown or at the County Courthouses in Markham, Bridgeview, Rolling Meadows, or Skokie); or your Township Assessor to file a Certificate of Error form. The County Assessor’s Offices can provide a corrected tax bill for missing or omitted exemptions while you wait.

The table below reflects the amounts of Homeowners and Senior Citizen homestead exemptions applicable for eligible individuals. The indicated exemption amount(s) is(are) subtracted from the Assessed Value after it has been multiplied and adjusted by the Equalization Factor.

Tax Year(s)	General Homestead Exemption		Senior Citizen Exemption	
	Cook	Will	Cook	Will
1999-2003	4500	3500	4500	2000
2004-2005	5000	3000	5000	3000
2006-2007	5000	4000	5000	4000
2008	5500	4000	5500	4000
2009-2011	6000	4000	6000	4000
2012	7000	5000	6000	4000
2013-2016	7000	5000	6000	5000
2017-2022	10000	6000	8000	8000
2023	10000	8000	8000	8000

The Cook County Expanded (Alternative) Homeowner’s Exemption existed from 2004 through 2014. When this program was active, it limited the increase in an owner-occupied property’s EAV to a compounded 7 percent annually from the 2004 base year through 2013. To effect the annual increase capitation, a variable homeowner exemption had been utilized that exceeded the “standard” exemption amounts noted in the table above.

I previously received a Senior Assessment Freeze Exemption but did not get this exemption this year. Is there something wrong with my bill? What can I do?

The Senior Freeze Exemption allows qualified senior citizens to freeze the equalized assessed value (EAV) of their properties for the year preceding the year in which they first apply and qualify for this exemption. For example, a senior citizen who qualifies and applies for this exemption in tax year 2014 will have the EAV of the property frozen at the 2013 EAV. Under the current program guidelines, the owner must be age 65 or older and have total household

income of less than \$65,000 to qualify for this exemption. Those who qualify and receive this exemption should be aware that this does not freeze the amount of their tax bill.

If the value of your residence has decreased or if tax rates increased, you may not receive any savings. To realize a savings on your tax bill, the equalized assessed value (EAV) must be greater than your “frozen” base year (the original year you filed for this exemption).

Changes in the property valuation or the Equalization Factor can cause a property to drop below the frozen base year and as a result the owner may no longer qualify for the Senior Assessment Freeze Exemption in a tax year. If the previous year’s value is higher than the current year’s, it is possible that no freeze exemption amount would be shown on the bill since the current assessed value could be lower than the applicable base year.

You may wish to contact one of the Cook County Assessor offices (downtown or at the County Courthouses in Markham, Bridgeview, Rolling Meadows or Skokie); or your Township Assessor if you have questions about your exemptions and possible omissions.

Visit [Property Tax Exemptions | Cook County Assessor's Office](#) for more details on exemptions.

My taxes went up even though my property value is less than last year. Why?

Through the property tax bills, the County collects a fixed amount of money that was levied by each government to fund their respective governmental operations. This fixed amount is spread proportionately over all property within that government’s boundaries based on the individual property values. Each individual tax parcel within a government’s jurisdiction pays a fractional share of the total fixed levy amount that was requested by that government. In this manner, all properties pay a portion of that government’s tax levy. The proportion (ratio) of the tax levy to the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) determines the property tax rate each year.

Changes in the State Equalization Factor and exemptions (Homeowner, Senior, etc.) can impact the EAV for a property.

Property taxes are designed to collect a fixed amount of money for the governments included on the tax bill. Just because the (property) values dropped does not mean taxing districts are going to be getting less money or taxpayers are going to be paying less.

An individual’s taxes can increase, particularly for taxpayers whose property did not lose value or whose value dropped less than others. This results in some taxpayers carrying more of the tax burden than others.

A simplified example:

The total amount of money levied for a government is \$100. There are only two properties within that government’s boundaries with equal taxable value (EAV) of \$50 each, or \$100 in total. The ratio of the levy to the tax base is 100 percent, which is also stated as a tax rate of \$100 per \$100 dollars of EAV. Each property owner pays \$50 in taxes.

In the following year, Property A is still worth \$50, but Property B is now worth \$45, for a total of \$95 in EAV. The government's tax levy request has remained unchanged and is again \$100. The resulting tax rate is now \$105.26 per \$100 of EAV (\$100 levy divided by \$95 EAV).

Although the tax levy was unchanged (\$100 in both years), the tax rate increased because the overall total property value went down (from \$100 to \$95).

In the second year, Property A pays \$52.63, and Property B pays \$47.37 which still totals the \$100 of levy requested.

Even though the tax rate increased in the second year, the government still only receives the \$100 it asked for (levied).

What is the State Equalization Factor?

The State Equalization Factor is also referred to as "The Multiplier." State statutes require that all property be assessed at 1/3 of fair value for property tax purposes. If a county elects to use another basis of assessment, it still must achieve an assessment base of 1/3 of fair value overall. Cook County currently has two primary assessment classification rates that place all residential type properties at a 10 percent assessment rate, and all other property (commercial and industrial) at a 25 percent assessment rate. The Equalization Factor is determined each year by the Illinois Department of Revenue for each county in the state to compensate for special classification systems (such as used by Cook County) and for other valuation abnormalities (under/overvaluation of properties). It is applied against all properties to achieve the required 1/3 overall level of assessment for tax purposes. To read more about the determination of Equalization Factors, see the Illinois Department of Revenue website [Table 3, Final Equalization Factors \(illinois.gov\)](#).

Why did the Tinley Park tax rate change?

The Village and the other governments do not set tax rates. The Village of Tinley Park has no control over the property tax rate that is determined each year. The tax rates for every government appearing on the tax bill will typically change from one year to the next. The tax rate is essentially the ratio of the levy amount requested by the government relative to the total EAV applicable for each governmental entity. The percentage of levy divided by EAV becomes a tax rate by moving the decimal place by two digits (whereby the rate is an amount per \$100 of EAV).

Determining the tax rate is one of the last steps in the property tax process before the Cook County second installment tax bills can be produced. Likewise, in Will County the tax rates are calculated just prior to the production of the property tax bills.

The tax rate is the ratio of each government's tax levy to the overall tax value (EAV) of all properties within that government's boundaries. There is an inverse relationship between the tax base and the tax rate. When the tax base (EAV) decreases, the tax rate will increase; even if the

tax levy does not change. (See example above under “**My taxes went up even though my property value is less than last year. Why?.**”)

The annual tax levy for the Village of Tinley Park and the Tinley Park Public Library are supposed to be shared equitably by all taxpayers within Tinley Park based on their individual property values. As you know, the Village of Tinley Park covers territory in both Cook and Will Counties. The annual tax levies of the Village and Library must be split between Cook and Will Counties based on the proportion of property value in each county. The computation of the tax rates for the Village and Library each year is complicated in Will County because the property value (EAV) for Cook County has not been finalized and known in April each year when Will County is preparing to issue its tax bills. This requires the Will County Clerk’s Tax Extension Office to prepare an estimate of Tinley Park’s Cook County tax base (EAV) to determine an estimated Total EAV for Tinley Park. This estimated Total EAV is then used to calculate the preliminary (estimated) share of the Village and Library tax levies to be spread across the Will County properties and to determine an estimated Will County tax rate. Once the Cook County EAV is known, Will County must recalculate the percentage of the Village’s tax levy for the year that should have been spread against Will County properties. The difference between the initial estimate and actual share of the levy for Will County is then added or subtracted in the calculation of the tax extension and rates for the following tax year for the Will County taxpayers. Because of this annual adjustment, it will skew the comparison of tax rates and the amount of taxes computed for the Village of Tinley Park between two tax years.

It is important to keep in mind that this decrease in property value does not affect the amount of dollars that were levied to support governmental operations. The Village does not control the valuation of property. Property valuation is handled primarily by the Township Assessors in Will County, and the County Assessor in Cook County.

What portion of my tax bill goes to the Village?

The portion of the total tax bill that is distributed to the Village of Tinley Park will vary based on the other overlapping taxing bodies that serve a property and their respective tax levy requests. On average, about 12 percent of your total taxes go to Tinley Park. As is typical throughout the State, based on the overall Tinley Park averages, the majority of your property tax money goes to support elementary school, high school and community college education services (72 percent); followed by the Village; then the County and Township (9 percent); Park District (4 percent); and Public Library (3 percent).

Why doesn’t the Village spend less and lower our property taxes?

It is difficult for the Village to make significant reductions in spending without laying off personnel and eliminating or reducing services. Approximately 2/3 of the Village operating budget is related to salary and benefits. The effects of reductions can not be immediately seen or felt in such things as property taxes due to the timing of the property tax cycle. Property taxes are billed in arrears (e.g., 2014 property taxes are paid in 2015). Most local governments, including Tinley Park, will look to when those property taxes are collected to support the then current operations. So, frequently governments will anticipate their future financial needs when taxes are collected in setting the amount of their levy each year. The Village does consider its

other revenue sources available to support operations (sales tax, income tax, etc.) in establishing its levy request each year, and additionally has utilized tax cap formulas to limit growth in the levy amount.

Inflation and increases in commodity costs, health insurance, liability insurance, and contractually obligated wage increases impact operating costs from year to year. These normal increases run counter to any efforts to reduce costs. Without reducing services and personnel, the Village has limited options to achieve significant cost reductions in its annual budget. Without significant increases in other revenue sources, the Village also has limited ability to reduce its reliance on the property tax levy for funding operations each year.

The tax bill has references to go to the Cook County Treasurer website to learn more about what local governments owe. What is this information about?

In an attempt to provide financial disclosure to taxpayers, the Cook County Treasurer's Office, in conjunction with the Cook County Board, developed a "Debt Disclosure Ordinance" (DDO) to require all Cook County taxing districts to provide certain disclosures to the Cook County Treasurer about its finances on an annual basis with particular emphasis on debts and liabilities. This information can be found under "Taxing District's Financial Statements" under the Cook County Treasurer's website www.cookcountytreasurer.com or the Cook County Property Tax Portal www.cookcountypropertyinfo.com.

We applaud the County's efforts to create a central repository of information for taxing bodies in Cook County. However, similar financial reporting has been available through the State Comptroller's Office for many years. Additionally, many taxing bodies (including the Village of Tinley Park) already provide similar (and often more detailed) financial information and disclosures through their own websites (see the Village of Tinley Park Transparency Portal page at [Transparency Portal \(tinleypark.org\)](http://Transparency Portal (tinleypark.org))).

The Cook County Treasurer's Debt Disclosure Ordinance has placed heavy emphasis on the total debt owed by taxing districts in Cook County. Regrettably, the County has prohibited governments from providing additional disclosure of the types and amounts of the various "debts" included in their required disclosure of "total debt." The data inputs that the County requests under the DDO can create a misleading representation of a taxing district's debt. Additionally, looking solely at debt does not provide a fair or reasonable picture of the financial position and financial operations of a taxing district and its ability to manage the reported debt, so we recommend caution in drawing conclusions from the data points presented on the County website under the Taxing District's Financial Statements information.

The extracted Taxing District's Financial Statement information found on the Cook County Treasurer's website was obtained from data entry required to be done by the individual taxing districts under the Debt Disclosure Ordinance requirements. Due to limited instructional guidance for the requested disclosures provided by Cook County, there are both inconsistencies in information provided by the taxing bodies and probable data entry errors that potentially compromise the integrity, comparability, and usefulness of these required Cook County disclosures. We warn readers to use this information with considerable caution, especially for comparative purposes as the information has not undergone any vetting or validation process before being published by Cook County on its website.

We would note that there is more useful financial information can be found in the annual audit report (Annual Comprehensive Financial Report) that each taxing district is required to upload as part of the Debt Disclosure Ordinance. These reports can be viewed by clicking on the linked Fiscal Year date on the Cook County Treasurer's website. As noted, additional financial information may also be found on the Illinois State Comptroller's website. In the interest of Open Government and Transparency, many taxing districts will have considerable financial disclosures included on their individual websites.

The Village of Tinley Park has created a "Transparency Portal" page on its website to centralize the majority of its open government disclosures in one location. Considerable financial information about Tinley Park can be found there covering at least a five-year period [Transparency Portal \(tinleypark.org\)](http://tinleypark.org).

How can I learn more about where my taxes go?

The Village has posted these FAQs, informational tables, charts, and graphs on the Transparency Portal [Transparency Portal \(tinleypark.org\)](http://tinleypark.org) of its website www.tinleypark.org.

The Cook County second installment tax bills have a column to indicate the percentage each taxing district represents of the total tax bill. Additionally, if your property is located in a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District, the bill will show what portion of the taxes is allocated to the TIF District.

You may also visit the Cook County Treasurer's website www.cookcountytreasurer.com or the Cook County Property Tax Portal www.cookcountypropertyinfo.com for Cook County's financial disclosures for the various taxing bodies applicable to your property. But as noted above, please be forewarned that some of this information may be of questionable value or validity.

You also can visit the websites of the various taxing bodies or contact them directly for more information about their tax levies.

You also can call Village Hall at (708) 444-5000 with your questions. We will be able to assist to the extent that the questions relate to the Village's finances and property taxes.