

APPLICATIONS FOR SENIOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS MAILED; ALL SENIORS MUST APPLY TO RENEW THEIR EXEMPTIONS

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Oak Park senior citizens received renewal applications for senior citizen property tax exemptions earlier this week, and will have until February 5 to return them to the Cook County Assessor's office. Local senior citizens should feel free to call the office of Oak Park Township Assessor Ali ElSaffar for help completing the forms.

Eligibility for Senior Citizen Exemptions. There are two senior citizen tax exemptions:

- 1) The ***Senior Exemption***, available to all seniors regardless of income, reduces property taxes by about \$550. It is available to any owner-occupied residential property whose owner was born in 1948 or earlier.
- 2) The ***Senior Freeze*** provides some seniors with additional savings if the combined income of all members of the household is less than \$55,000, and if the senior has been an owner-occupant of the property since January 1, 2012.

The senior applications that have been mailed are for 2013 property taxes, which are paid in calendar year 2014. The savings from the exemptions will appear on the second installment tax bills that will likely be mailed in July of 2014.

Law on Erroneous Exemptions. A new law requires taxpayers to repay tax savings received from tax exemptions that they are not eligible for. If a senior citizen recently died or moved, the property may not be eligible for a senior exemption this year.

If the senior resided at the property at any time during 2013, the property will be eligible for the 2013 senior citizen exemptions for taxes paid in calendar year 2014. But the property will not be eligible for senior exemptions on the 2014 taxes (paid in 2015), unless the senior left a surviving spouse who was sixty-five or older. A surviving spouse who completes an application may continue receiving the senior exemptions.

Information for Seniors not Receiving Mailings. Homeowners who were born in 1948 turned sixty-five in 2013, and thus are likely to be eligible for one of the senior exemptions for the first time. "Taxpayers who recently turned sixty-five will not receive application forms when the senior renewal forms are mailed," Assessor ElSaffar said. "I encourage such individuals to call my office to obtain the forms and information necessary to receive the senior benefits. The forms are also available online at www.CookCountyAssessor.com."

Release date: January 10, 2014