

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

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Oak Park residents sixty-five years of age or older should receive renewal forms for senior citizen property tax exemptions this week, and will have until February 8 to file them. Local seniors 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 tax exemptions:

- 1) The ***Senior Exemption***, available to all seniors regardless of income, reduces property taxes by about \$675. It is available for any owner-occupied residential property if the owner was born in 1951 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, 2015.

The recently mailed senior applications are for the 2016 property taxes, which are paid in calendar year 2017. The savings from the exemptions will appear on the second installment tax bills that will likely be mailed in late June of 2017.

Information for Seniors not Receiving Mailings. Homeowners who were born in 1951 turned sixty-five in 2016, and thus are likely to be eligible for the senior exemptions for the first time. “Taxpayers who recently turned sixty-five will probably not receive applications 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 exemptions. The forms are also available online at www.CookCountyAssessor.com.”

Law on Erroneous Exemptions relating to Seniors. Owners of properties that erroneously receive tax exemptions can be made to repay the tax savings from any exemption for which they are not eligible. To avoid erroneous senior citizen exemptions, it is important to understand the eligibility rules for such exemptions. Although generally straightforward, the rules can be confusing after a senior leaves his or her home.

If a senior was in residence on January 1, 2016, the property should be eligible for the 2016 senior exemptions (paid in 2017), even if the senior citizen ceased living at the property later in 2016. But in most cases the property will not be eligible for senior tax exemptions in subsequent years. Residents with questions about eligibility for senior exemptions should call the Township Assessor's office.

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