

SENIORS MUST APPLY FOR 'SENIOR FREEZE' FOR FIRST TIME IN TWO YEARS;  
MOST OTHER PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS RENEWED AUTOMATICALLY

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After a two-year break, senior citizens eligible for the Senior Freeze property tax exemption will again have to complete application forms to renew the exemption. Annual renewal applications are usually required because eligibility for the Freeze depends on income, which can change from year to year. But according to Oak Park Township Assessor Ali ElSaffar, the annual renewal requirement was waived during the pandemic.

Since the worst of the pandemic is now over, the pre-pandemic rules are back in effect and taxpayers seeking the Senior Freeze will again have to apply for it. Applications were mailed in mid-April and Assessor ElSaffar reminds residents that his office is available to help seniors complete and file the Freeze renewal application.

The Senior Freeze is one of two property tax exemptions available to people sixty-five years of age or older. The eligibility requirements for each exemption for tax year 2022 (which will appear on bills paid in calendar year 2023) are below:

- 1) The **Senior Exemption**, available to all seniors regardless of income, reduces Oak Park property taxes by about \$1,000. It is available for residential properties if an owner lived in the property in 2022 and was born in 1957 or earlier. If the property received the Senior Exemption last year, it should be automatically renewed unless the property sold recently.
- 2) The **Senior Freeze** provides seniors with additional savings if the combined income of all members of the household is \$65,000 or less, and if the senior has been an owner-occupant of the property since January 1, 2021. Seniors should complete and file a Freeze application by May 10.

**New Senior Citizens.** Homeowners who were born in 1957 turned sixty-five in 2022, and thus are likely to be eligible for the senior exemptions for the first time. "Taxpayers who recently turned sixty-five may not receive senior application forms in the mail," Assessor ElSaffar said. "I encourage such individuals to call my office for information about the senior exemptions. Information is also available on the Cook County Assessor's web site."

**Other Exemptions.** The Homeowner Exemption, available to all owner-occupied homes, will be automatically renewed for those who received it last year. In addition, recipients of the Exemption for People with Disabilities will have their exemptions automatically renewed for the first time this year. But there will be no automatic renewals for properties that sold in 2021. Those who purchased their homes in 2021 will have to apply this year for the 2022 Homeowner Exemption and any other exemptions for which they are eligible.

Savings from all property tax exemptions will appear on the second installment of 2022 tax bills, which will likely be mailed in the fall of 2023. Taxpayers with questions about exemptions or needing help applying for them should feel free to call the Oak Park Township Assessor's office.

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