

PROPERTY TAX BILLS WILL LIKELY BE DUE AUGUST 1

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For the first time in several years, second installment property tax bills in Cook County are expected to be mailed by July 1 and due on August 1, in accordance with state law. If this expectation holds true it may come as a surprise to taxpayers, according to Oak Park Township Assessor Ali ElSaffar. This is because the due dates in recent years have been considerably later than August 1.

Second installment tax bills cannot be issued until the county's two tax appeal agencies complete the processing of all Cook County tax appeals. But in the last two years, computer compatibility problems between the agencies delayed appeal processing by several months and as a result, second installment tax bills were not due until December.

This year, the appeal agencies made a concerted effort to complete their work earlier and they succeeded in finishing the processing of appeals on May 5. Historically, appeal completion dates in early May have left enough time to complete the other steps necessary for bills to be issued on time. Unless there are unexpected delays in the remaining steps in the process, this year's bills should be due August 1.

The budgets of schools and other local governments can be severely disrupted when the tax revenue they rely on arrives four or five months late, as has happened in the last two years. And the budgets of taxpayers can also be disrupted by unpredictable due dates for tax bills. The expected August 1 due date for this year's second installment bills will be just eight months after the due date of last year's second installment bills, and during those eight months taxpayers will have paid three property tax bills. This will cause hardship for some.

"For the sake of taxpayers and taxing districts," Assessor ElSaffar said, "I hope there will be more certainty and predictability in tax bill due dates going forward."

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