

Polk County Tax Department
About Your Real Estate/Business Property Tax Bill

WHEN SHOULD I RECEIVE MY TAX BILL?

Polk County typically mails tax bills on July 5th of each year. The tax bill covers the calendar year from January 1st until December 31st of each year. However, the amount billed to you is for the County's fiscal year, which begins each July 1st. The tax bill you receive from the County will be in "postcard" format, which saves postage. On your bill, you will be able to ascertain your parcel (map) number, your assessed valuation, your account number, bill number, any exemption received, and the tax districts and rates you are being billed for, as well as the total amount due. If you have a business or a residence, your bill should also reflect a solid waste fee charge.

SHOULD I READ THE BACK OF THE TAX BILL?

The back of your tax bill gives you very important information regarding any discounts, when taxes are due, and when interest begins to accrue. Interest and due dates are established by the State of North Carolina, not Polk County. A 2% interest charge is assessed January 6th of each tax year, plus $\frac{3}{4}$ of one percent is applied each month thereafter until paid.

Information about the Solid Waste Fee can also be found on the back of your tax bill. The Solid Waste Fee was adopted by the Polk County Board of Commissioners in 2004.

A PAID RECEIPT FOR YOUR RECORDS

If you mail your tax payment, the Tax Office will gladly mail you back a paid receipt for your records. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with your payment.

HOW ARE TAXES CALCULATED?

Taxes are calculated differently in various areas of the County, and are based on in-town, fire districts, and Harmon Field districts. Polk County currently bills for Columbus "inside", Harmon Field, and the fire districts. If you live in Tryon or Saluda, you will receive both a County tax bill and a Tryon (or Saluda) tax bill.

To calculate the tax on your home, let's assume that you have a house in the Columbus "outside" taxing area that has a value of \$150,000. Your County tax rate is .68, and the Columbus Fire District rate is .0420, for a combined rate of .7220 per hundred dollars of assessed valuation. To calculate the tax, multiply the assessed value by the tax rate of .7220 per hundred dollars. Your tax bill should be \$1,083.00. In addition to the tax, the County also bills the Solid Waste Fee (currently \$35.00 per household). Your total bill should then be \$1,118.00.

WHAT ABOUT DISCOUNTS?

The County currently offers a 2% discount if your tax bill is paid by July 31st. This 2% discount also applies to any Solid Waste Fees. To take advantage of this 2% discount, your payment must be received by the Tax Department no later than July 31st. The County will also accept the 2% discount if your payment is **mailed and postmarked** by July 31st.

Likewise, the County offers a 1% discount in August of each year. Again, the 1% discount will apply to any Solid Waste Fees. Your payment must be received by August 31st or postmarked by that date to receive the 1% discount.

Your tax bill that is mailed in July does not take into account the 2% or 1% discount. Using the example above, to calculate a 2% discount, simply take the total of your tax bill of \$1,118 and multiply by .98. Your payment should be \$1095.64.

PARTIAL PAYMENTS:

If you are unable to pay your tax bill in full by the due date, we will be happy to establish a payment plan for you. Interest will accrue on any unpaid balance as mandated by State Statute. Please contact the Tax Department staff for further information.

PUBLICATION OF UNPAID TAXES

As mandated by State Statutes, all Counties are required to publish a list in a local newspaper each year of current taxes unpaid. That publication takes place each year in March. If your taxes are unpaid by about the 3rd week in January, you can expect a letter from the Tax Department notifying you of the publication requirement and giving you a due date to avoid publication. Your tax bill must be paid in full in order to avoid publication.

WHAT ABOUT MORTGAGE COMPANIES?

If your taxes are escrowed by a mortgage company, that company should pay your tax bill. However, tax bills are mailed to owners, not to the mortgage company. It is your responsibility to forward your tax bill to the mortgage company and to follow up to make sure that timely payment has been made.

WHAT IF I DIDN'T GET A TAX BILL?

The Post Office might have mis-delivered the bill, or you might have moved and not left a forwarding address. Please notify the Tax Department if you have moved so that we can correct our records. In the case of a sale after January 1st, the previous owner should have received the bill. Owners of record as of January 1st are billed in July of that year. It is your responsibility to make sure taxes are paid on time, even if you did not receive a bill in the mail.

TAX RELIEF PROVISIONS:

There are tax relief provisions if the resident owner is 65 years of age or older, or is totally and permanently disabled. The annual income limit for this relief is established each year by the State of North Carolina. For example, the 2006 limit applicable for 2007 taxes has been established at \$20,500. All household income (such as pensions and capital gains) as well as Social Security taxes must be taken into account when calculating your income eligibility. Please contact the Tax Department for further information. Applications and your income documentation must be received by the Tax Department by June 1st of each year in order to be considered for the current year. The State of North Carolina requires that the County Assessor periodically review those taxpayers receiving this benefit to test for continued compliance with the current income limit. If you qualify, 50% of your assessed valuation for your home and up to one acre for the homesite can be excluded from taxation.