

# Despite coronavirus slowdowns, property taxes still due April 10

But tax collectors will waive penalties for late payments due to COVID-19. The federal and state income tax deadline has been pushed to July 15.



Taxpayers line up to remit their property taxes in Santa Ana. Property taxes still are due April 10, but officials will consider applications for late-penalty waivers if a taxpayer can show payment was delinquent due to the coronavirus outbreak. (File photo by the Orange County Register/SCNG.)

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Bars are shuttered. Restaurants are open for takeout only. County offices are closed to the public.

And while many are hunkered down in homes rather than going to work, one thing remains unchanged in the age of coronavirus: Property taxes still are due April 10.

Tax collectors in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties all have issued notices saying they don't have the power to waive the property tax deadline — even though tax offices are being closed to the public.

But local officials will consider waiving late fees on a case-by-case basis for those unable to pay on time because they are ill or out of work because of the coronavirus outbreak.

“Obviously, in relation to something like this, we’d be looking at are you quarantined around the due date? Are you ill? Are you hospitalized?” said Matthew Jennings, Riverside County’s Assistant Treasurer-Tax Collector. “We would require documentation. (But) the law allows us certain flexibility, and we exercise it.”

County officials likely will consider a loss of income due to a business shut down or layoff as well, Jennings said.

Starting April 11, Los Angeles County property owners can submit a request for penalty cancellation if they are unable to pay their property taxes on time because of COVID-19, Treasurer and Tax Collector Keith Knox said in a statement.

His department set up a special team to process requests for those affected by the outbreak, Knox said.

“I’m getting ready to submit an executive order that will waive penalty fees for those that cannot make their payment on the due date,” L.A. County Board of Supervisors Chair Kathryn Barger added at an online media briefing Thursday afternoon. “We are recognizing that it’s going to be a hardship for some individuals, so we are trying to be as flexible as possible.”

Similar action is planned in neighboring counties.

“Every year, we exercise this authority by reviewing each taxpayer request on a case-by-case basis after the taxpayer has completed a penalty cancellation form,” said Orange County Treasurer-Tax Collector Shari Freidenrich. “We expect to continue this process this year.”

In Riverside and San Bernardino counties, taxpayers need to fill out a form seeking the waiver, specifying the reasons for a late payment and providing proof.

Waiving late penalties on a case-by-case basis may not be enough, local members of Congress say. A Friday, March 20, [letter signed by all seven Orange County House representatives](#) asks the O.C. Board of Supervisors to delay property tax payments and penalties for all residents.

“Orange County small businesses are shuttering, workers about being laid off, and families are wondering how they will put food on the table,” U.S. Rep. Harley Rouda, a Democrat, said. “The Orange County Board of Supervisors should consider doing everything in their power to help struggling Orange County families, including delaying April’s property tax and delinquency tax deadlines.”

However, a spokeswoman for state Controller Betty Yee said there’s nothing in state law allowing the controller or counties to extend the deadline. A statement by the California Association of County Treasurers and Tax Collectors said property tax deadlines can be postponed only if they fall on a weekend or legal holiday.

To be on time, payments must be received or postmarked by April 10. Since public access to tax collection offices is being shut down during the outbreak, officials are urging taxpayers to pay online, by phone or by mail. They also can leave payments in drop boxes at tax collection offices.

Freidenrich noted that just 2% of Orange County's payments now are made in person. She urges taxpayers to use eCheck payments, which uses your bank account and is accessible through her website. Websites for both Riverside and San Bernardino counties also have links and information for making online payments.

Generally, eCheck payments are free, while there's a service charge for credit and debit card payments.

Property taxes fall into two categories. Personal property taxes are paid for things like yachts, airplanes or business equipment. But the bulk of property taxes comes from real estate, both residential and commercial.

Renters don't pay property taxes directly, but their monthly rent payments are used to cover their landlord's property tax bills.

Taxpayers are getting a [break this year on income taxes](#), however.

The Franchise Tax Board announced Wednesday it is giving California taxpayers until July 15 both to file and to pay 2019 state income taxes.

On Friday, March 20, U.S. Treasury Steven Mnuchin announced the federal income tax filing deadline also will be July 15.

— *SCNG staff writers Alicia Robinson and Brooke Staggs contributed to this report.*