

About Us



Cedric Giles
Cook County Clerk

The Cook County Clerk's office has a variety of property tax responsibilities. When delinquent or unpaid taxes are sold by the Cook County Treasurer's office, the Clerk's office handles the redemption process, which allows taxpayers to redeem, or pay, their taxes to remove the risk of losing their property. Records for delinquent taxes for prior years are the responsibility of the Clerk's office.

The Clerk's office also maintains the county's property tax maps and calculates tax rates based on the tax levies submitted by the county's taxing districts and the valuation of properties within those districts.

Contact Us

Cook County Clerk's Office

118 N. Clark, Room 434

Chicago, IL 60602

312.603.5645

tax.redemption@cookcountyil.gov

cookcountyclerk.com/tsd

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



a guide to the TAX REDEMPTION PROCESS

What happens when you don't pay your property taxes

Cedric Giles
cookcountyclerk.com



tax collection and tax redemption



Schools, hospitals, parks and many other public facilities and services are paid for through real estate property taxes. Without property tax dollars, local governments and services cannot operate. This is why Illinois law imposes strict, large penalties for property owners who do not pay their real estate taxes on time.

This brochure explains key stages in the property tax cycle: Billing & Payment, Delinquency, Warning Notice, Tax Sale and Tax Redemption.

Billing and Payment

The County Treasurer mails tax bills to property owners twice a year. The first bill arrives early in the calendar year and is due on March 1. The second tax bill arrives in the mail in mid-summer and is due approximately 30 days later. Visit cookcountytreasurer.com for payment options.

Open Taxes: Delinquent or unpaid taxes from a prior year that were neither sold nor forfeited at an annual tax sale. Usually, these taxes are those that the Cook County Treasurer's office withheld from the annual tax sale, due to pending action such as a Certificate of Error filed with the Cook County Assessor's office.

Redemption: The process of repaying taxes that have been the subject of a judgment in the Circuit Court of Cook County and either sold to a tax buyer or forfeited.

Tax Buyer: The individual or entity that purchased the taxes at an auction conducted by the Cook County Treasurer's office, or purchased over-the-counter for forfeited taxes that were offered and not sold at the annual sale. The tax buyer acquires an interest in the property which can lead to a loss of the property if the taxes are not redeemed within the redemption period.

Take Notice(s): Official notifications of a tax sale warning a property owner to redeem their taxes.

tax redemption terms



Tax Sale: The tax sale conducted each year by the County Treasurer's office for the taxes not paid in the prior tax year.

Certificate of Deposit for Redemption: A certification issued by the Clerk's office showing the date and payment amount deposited in the Clerk's office for the redemption of a particular tax sale on a particular property. The certification shows the name of the redeeming party and itemizes the various taxes, penalties, costs and fees.

Current Taxes: Taxes levied and due, until the date of the annual tax sale.

Delinquent Taxes: Past due and unpaid taxes.

Sold Taxes: The tax lien of unpaid taxes, penalties, costs and fees that was purchased during a tax sale by an entity or individual who may take ownership of the property if the sale is not redeemed within the permitted timeframe.

Forfeited Tax: Any tax which was offered at an annual tax sale and not sold. These taxes are available to interested investors who wish to purchase them over-the-counter at the Clerk's office at any time after the annual tax sale at which they were originally offered.

Delinquency

If you don't pay your property tax by the due date, also known as the "penalty date," the property taxes are "delinquent." Everything owed — the unpaid taxes and penalties — can be sold at the annual public auction of real estate taxes, known as the "tax sale."

If you are late paying your taxes, contact the County Treasurer at 312.443.5100 or cookcountytreasurer.com to learn the exact amount you need to pay, including all penalties. Even if you are only one day late with your tax payment, you will have to pay the balance due plus a penalty of 1.5% interest per month.

Warning Notice

Before your property taxes are sold at the tax sale, the County Treasurer mails a Certified Notice to warn you to pay your taxes and penalties. Payment in full must be made prior to the scheduled tax sale date to avoid having your unpaid taxes sold to a tax buyer.

tax timeline



Typical Timeline

1st Installment Tax Bill Mailed — *end of January*

1st Installment Due Date — *March 1*

2nd Installment Tax Bill Mailed — *mid-summer*

2nd Installment Due Date — *approximately 30 days later*

Delinquent Timeline

After March 1 penalties and interest begin accumulating

After 2nd Installment due date penalties and interest begin accumulating

Warning Notice Mailed by Treasurer

Tax Sale / Redemption Period Begins

Q What do I do if my unpaid taxes were offered but not sold?

Request an “Estimate of the Cost of Redemption for Forfeited Taxes,” or if you have unpaid prior year taxes, you can request an “Open Item Tax Bill.”

Tax bills and documents can be ordered either in person at the County Clerk’s downtown office or follow the detailed instructions on cookcountyclerk.com. A proof of payment (“Certificate of Payment”) may be ordered in person or by mail.

If you have further questions regarding the tax redemption process, email us at tax.redemption@cookcountyl.gov.

IMPORTANT! *Taxes, interest and fees must be paid in full, according to state law. There are no payment plans or partial payments for redemption payments.*



Q How serious are the penalties for paying my taxes late?

The longer you wait, the more you will owe.

Late but before tax sale: If you pay late, but before the annual tax sale, you must pay your unpaid tax bill plus a penalty of 1.5% per month, or any part of a month.

Late and after tax sale: If your taxes are unpaid through the end of the year and are sold at the tax sale, you must pay the original taxes, plus the monthly 1.5% interest, plus interest on the buyer's investment, plus various fees and costs.

If you do not pay your taxes until the very end of the legal redemption period—which can be up to 2.5 years after the date of the tax sale—you may pay more than twice your original bill in interest and fees.

If you don't pay all the original taxes you owe and all the interest, penalties and fees, then the tax buyer can actually acquire legal title to your property at the end of the "redemption period." The property then becomes the tax buyer's, and is no longer yours.

Tax Sale

The tax sale is conducted by the County Treasurer and held sometime after the 2nd installment is due. At this sale, a "tax buyer" can buy your overdue taxes and penalties and place a lien on your property. The tax buyer's payment is then distributed to your local taxing districts such as schools and libraries.

If your taxes have been sold at the tax sale, you must pay your delinquent tax + monthly interest + tax buyer interest + fees to the tax buyer to regain clear title to your property.

The interest rates for taxes sold to a buyer are very high — as much as 36% interest per year. But if you don't pay your late taxes, the tax buyer can eventually gain ownership of your property.

**Delinquent Tax
+ 1.5% Monthly Interest
+ Tax Buyer Interest
+ Fees**

Total Cost of Redemption



frequently asked questions

Tax Redemption

If your taxes are sold at the tax sale, you can regain rights to your property by paying the unpaid taxes as well as additional interest and fees. This is called a “tax redemption.” Check the County Clerk’s website at cookcountyclerk.com and conduct a Delinquent Property Tax Search to see if your property taxes have been sold or if there are any other delinquent taxes on your property. To use the search, simply enter your Property Index Number (PIN) to check for sold, forfeited or unpaid taxes for the last 20 years.

If your taxes have been sold, contact the County Clerk at 312.603.5645 or go to cookcountyclerk.com to learn how to order an “Estimate of the Cost of Redemption.” This is a calculation of the amount you need to pay to redeem the sale and remove the threat of loss of the property. Payment must be made in full with currency, certified or cashier’s check, express or U.S. money orders. Instructions to submit an “Estimate of the Cost of Redemption” can be downloaded from cookcountyclerk.com or by emailing us at tax.redemption@cookcountyil.gov.

Q What exactly does it mean when my property is “sold for taxes?” Does this mean that somebody gets my house if I miss a tax payment?

It could ultimately mean that, but most people pay their late taxes and penalties rather than lose their property.

Q If my property is sold at a tax sale, how long do I have to repay?

Typically, the redemption period can be from six months to 2.5 years. The tax buyer can extend it up to three years after the date of sale.

IMPORTANT!
*The County Clerk or County
Treasurer cannot give legal advice.*