

**RCW 84.56.020 Taxes collected by treasurer—Dates of delinquency
—Tax statement notice concerning payment by check—Interest—Penalties
—Extensions during state of emergency.**

Treasurers' tax collection duties.

(1) The county treasurer must be the receiver and collector of all taxes extended upon the tax rolls of the county, whether levied for state, county, school, bridge, road, municipal or other purposes, and also of all fines, forfeitures or penalties received by any person or officer for the use of his or her county. No treasurer may accept tax payments or issue receipts for the same until the treasurer has completed the tax roll for the current year's collection and provided notification of the completion of the roll. Notification may be accomplished electronically, by posting a notice in the office, or through other written communication as determined by the treasurer. All real and personal property taxes and assessments made payable by the provisions of this title are due and payable to the county treasurer on or before the 30th day of April and, except as provided in this section, are delinquent after that date.

Tax statements.

(2) (a) Tax statements for the current year's collection must be distributed to each taxpayer on or before March 15th provided that:

(i) All city and other taxing district budgets have been submitted to county legislative authorities by November 30th per RCW 84.52.020;

(ii) The county legislative authority in turn has certified taxes levied to the county assessor in accordance with RCW 84.52.070; and

(iii) The county assessor has delivered the tax roll to the county treasurer by January 15th per RCW 84.52.080.

(b) Each tax statement must include a notice that checks for payment of taxes may be made payable to "Treasurer of County" or other appropriate office, but tax statements may not include any suggestion that checks may be made payable to the name of the individual holding the office of treasurer nor any other individual.

(c) Each tax statement distributed to an address must include a notice with information describing the:

(i) Property tax exemption program pursuant to RCW 84.36.379 through 84.36.389; and

(ii) Property tax deferral program pursuant to chapter 84.38 RCW.

Tax payment due dates.

On-time tax payments: First-half taxes paid by April 30th and second-half taxes paid by October 31st.

(3) (a) When the total amount of tax or special assessments on personal property or on any lot, block or tract of real property payable by one person is \$50 or more, and if one-half of such tax is paid on or before the 30th day of April, the remainder of such tax is due and payable on or before the following 31st day of October and is delinquent after that date.

(b) Payments generated by an automated check processing service or payments sent via United States mail with no discernable postmark date and received within three business days of the 30th day of April or the 31st day of October, as required under (a) of this subsection, are not delinquent.

Delinquent tax payments for current year: First-half taxes paid after April 30th.

(4) (a) When the total amount of tax or special assessments on any lot, block or tract of real property, personal property, or on any mobile home payable by one person is \$50 or more, and if one-half of such tax is paid after the 30th day of April but before the 31st day of October, together with the applicable interest and penalty on the full amount of tax payable for that year, the remainder of such tax is due and payable on or before the following 31st day of October and is delinquent after that date.

(b) Payments generated by an automated check processing service or payments sent via United States mail with no discernable postmark date and received within three business days of the 30th day of April or the 31st day of October, as required under (a) of this subsection, are not delinquent.

Delinquent tax payments: Interest, penalties, and treasurer duties.

(5) (a) Except as provided in (c) of this subsection, delinquent taxes under this section are subject to interest as provided in this subsection computed on a monthly basis on the amount of tax delinquent from the date of delinquency until paid. Interest must be calculated at the rate as described below.

(i) Until December 31, 2022, the interest rate is 12 percent per annum for all nonresidential real property, residential real property, and personal property.

(ii) Beginning January 1, 2023, interest rates are as follows:

(A) Nine percent per annum for all residential real property with four or fewer units per taxable parcel, including manufactured/mobile homes as defined in RCW 59.20.030 for taxes levied in 2023 or after; or

(B) Twelve percent per annum for all other property.

(b) (i) Penalties on delinquent taxes under this section may not be assessed beginning January 1, 2022, and through December 31, 2022.

(ii) Beginning January 1, 2023, delinquent taxes under this section are subject to penalties for nonresidential real property, residential real property with greater than four units per taxable parcel, and for personal property as follows:

(A) A penalty of three percent of the amount of tax delinquent is assessed on the tax delinquent on June 1st of the year in which the tax is due.

(B) An additional penalty of eight percent is assessed on the delinquent tax amount on December 1st of the year in which the tax is due.

(iii) Penalties may not be assessed on residential real property with four or fewer units per taxable parcel, including manufactured/mobile homes as defined in RCW 59.20.030.

(c) (i) If a taxpayer is successfully participating in a payment agreement under subsection (15) (b) of this section or a partial payment program pursuant to subsection (15) (c) of this section, the county treasurer may not assess additional penalties on delinquent taxes that are included within the payment agreement. Interest and penalties that have been assessed prior to the payment agreement remain due and payable as provided in the payment agreement.

(ii) The following remain due and payable as provided in any payment agreement:

(A) Interest that has been assessed prior to the payment agreement; and

(B) Penalties assessed prior to January 1, 2022, that have been assessed prior to the payment agreement.

(6) A county treasurer must provide notification to each taxpayer whose taxes have become delinquent under subsections (4) and (5) of this section. The delinquency notice must specify where the taxpayer can obtain information regarding:

(a) Any current tax or special assessments due as of the date of the notice;

(b) Any delinquent tax or special assessments due, including any penalties and interest, as of the date of the notice; and

(c) Where the taxpayer can pay his or her property taxes directly and contact information, including but not limited to the phone number, for the statewide foreclosure hotline recommended by the Washington state housing finance commission.

(7) Within 90 days after the expiration of two years from the date of delinquency (when a taxpayer's taxes have become delinquent), the county treasurer must provide the name and property address of the delinquent taxpayer to a homeownership resource center or any other designated local or state entity recommended by the Washington state housing finance commission.

Collection of foreclosure costs.

(8) (a) When real property taxes become delinquent and prior to the filing of the certificate of delinquency, the treasurer is authorized to assess and collect tax foreclosure avoidance costs.

(b) When tax foreclosure avoidance costs are collected, such costs must be credited to the county treasurer service fund account, except as otherwise directed.

(c) For purposes of chapter 84.64 RCW, any taxes, interest, or penalties deemed delinquent under this section remain delinquent until such time as all taxes, interest, and penalties for the tax year in which the taxes were first due and payable have been paid in full.

Periods of armed conflict.

(9) Subsection (5) of this section notwithstanding, no interest or penalties may be assessed during any period of armed conflict regarding delinquent taxes imposed on the personal residences owned by active duty military personnel who are participating as part of one of the branches of the military involved in the conflict and assigned to a duty station outside the territorial boundaries of the United States.

State of emergency.

(10) During a state of emergency declared under RCW 43.06.010(12), the county treasurer, on his or her own motion or at the request of any taxpayer affected by the emergency, may grant extensions of the due date of any taxes payable under this section as the treasurer deems proper.

Retention of funds from interest.

(11) All collections of interest on delinquent taxes must be credited to the county current expense fund.

(12) For purposes of this chapter, "interest" means both interest and penalties.

Retention of funds from property foreclosures and sales.

(13) The direct cost of foreclosure and sale of real property, and the direct fees and costs of distraint and sale of personal property, for delinquent taxes, must, when collected, be credited to the operation and maintenance fund of the county treasurer prosecuting the foreclosure or distraint or sale; and must be used by the county treasurer as a revolving fund to defray the cost of further foreclosure, distraint, and sale because of delinquent taxes without

regard to budget limitations and not subject to indirect costs of other charges.

Tax due dates and options for tax payment collections.

Electronic billings and payments.

(14) For purposes of this chapter, and in accordance with this section and RCW 36.29.190, the treasurer may collect taxes, assessments, fees, rates, interest, and charges by electronic billing and payment. Electronic billing and payment may be used as an option by the taxpayer, but the treasurer may not require the use of electronic billing and payment. Electronic bill presentment and payment may be on a monthly or other periodic basis as the treasurer deems proper for:

- (a) Delinquent tax year payments; and
- (b) Prepayments of current tax.

Tax payments.

Prepayment for current taxes.

(15) (a) The treasurer may accept prepayments for current year taxes by any means authorized. All prepayments must be paid in full by the due date specified in subsection (16) of this section.

Payment agreements for current year taxes.

(b) (i) The treasurer may provide, by electronic means or otherwise, a payment agreement that provides for payment of current year taxes, inclusive of prepayment collection charges. The payment agreement must be signed by the taxpayer and treasurer or the treasurer's deputy prior to the sending of an electronic or alternative bill, which includes a payment plan for current year taxes.

Payment agreements for delinquent year taxes.

(ii) (A) The treasurer may provide, by electronic means or otherwise, a payment agreement for payment of past due delinquencies. The payment agreement must be signed by the taxpayer and treasurer or the treasurer's deputy prior to the sending of an electronic or alternative bill, which includes a payment plan for past due delinquent taxes and charges.

(B) Tax payments received by a treasurer for delinquent year taxes from a taxpayer participating on a payment agreement must be applied first to the oldest delinquent year unless such taxpayer requests otherwise.

Partial payments: Acceptance of partial payments for current and delinquent taxes.

(c) (i) In addition to the payment agreement program in (b) of this subsection, the treasurer may accept partial payment of any current and delinquent taxes including interest and penalties by any means authorized including electronic bill presentment and payments.

(ii) All tax payments received by a treasurer for delinquent year taxes from a taxpayer paying a partial payment must be applied first to the oldest delinquent year unless such taxpayer requests otherwise.

Payment for delinquent taxes.

(d) Payments on past due taxes must include collection of the oldest delinquent year, which includes interest, penalties, and taxes within an eighteen-month period, prior to filing a certificate of delinquency under chapter 84.64 RCW or distraint pursuant to RCW 84.56.070.

Due date for tax payments.

(16) All taxes upon real and personal property made payable by the provisions of this title are due and payable to the treasurer on or before the 30th day of April and are delinquent after that date.

The remainder of the tax is due and payable on or before the following 31st of October and is delinquent after that date. All other assessments, fees, rates, and charges are delinquent after the due date.

Electronic funds transfers.

(17) A county treasurer may authorize payment of:

(a) Any current property taxes due under this chapter by electronic funds transfers on a monthly or other periodic basis; and

(b) Any past due property taxes, penalties, and interest under this chapter by electronic funds transfers on a monthly or other periodic basis. Delinquent taxes are subject to interest and penalties, as provided in subsection (5) of this section. All tax payments received by a treasurer from a taxpayer paying delinquent year taxes must be applied first to the oldest delinquent year unless such taxpayer requests otherwise.

Payment for administering prepayment collections.

(18) The treasurer must pay any collection costs, investment earnings, or both on past due payments or prepayments to the credit of a county treasurer service fund account to be created and used only for the payment of expenses incurred by the treasurer, without limitation, in administering the system for collecting prepayments.

Waiver of interest and penalties for qualified taxpayers subject to foreclosure.

(19) No earlier than 60 days prior to the date that is three years after the date of delinquency, the treasurer must waive all outstanding interest and penalties on delinquent taxes due from a taxpayer if the property is subject to an action for foreclosure under chapter 84.64 RCW and the following requirements are met:

(a) The taxpayer is income-qualified under RCW 84.36.381(5) (a), as verified by the county assessor;

(b) The taxpayer occupies the property as their principal place of residence; and

(c) The taxpayer has not previously received a waiver on the property as provided under this subsection.

Definitions.

(20) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Electronic billing and payment" means statements, invoices, or bills that are created, delivered, and paid using the internet. The term includes an automatic electronic payment from a person's checking account, debit account, or credit card.

(b) "Internet" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 19.270.010.

(c) "Tax foreclosure avoidance costs" means those direct costs associated with the administration of properties subject to and prior to foreclosure. Tax foreclosure avoidance costs include:

(i) Compensation of employees for the time devoted to administering the avoidance of property foreclosure; and

(ii) The cost of materials, services, or equipment acquired, consumed, or expended in administering tax foreclosure avoidance prior to the filing of a certificate of delinquency. [2023 c 376 s 1; 2022 c 143 s 1. Prior: 2021 c 257 s 1; 2021 c 122 s 15; (2021 c 73 s 1 expired January 1, 2022); 2021 c 42 s 3; 2019 c 332 s 1; 2017 c 142 s 1; 2014 c 13 s 1; 2013 c 239 s 3; 2010 c 200 s 1; 2008 c 181 s 510; 2007 c 105 s 2; 2005 c 502 s 7; 2004 c 161 s 6; 1996 c 153 s 1; prior: 1991 c 245 s 16; 1991 c 52 s 1; 1988 c 222 s 30; 1987 c 211 s 1; 1984 c 131 s 1; 1981 c 322 s 2; 1974 ex.s. c 196 s 1; 1974 ex.s. c 116 s 1;

1971 ex.s. c 288 s 3; 1969 ex.s. c 216 s 3; 1961 c 15 s 84.56.020; prior: 1949 c 21 s 1; 1935 c 30 s 2; 1931 c 113 s 1; 1925 ex.s. c 130 s 83; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 11244; prior: 1917 c 141 s 1; 1899 c 141 s 6; 1897 c 71 s 68; 1895 c 176 s 14; 1893 c 124 s 69; 1890 p 561 s 84; Code 1881 s 2892. Formerly RCW 84.56.020 and 84.56.030.]

Effective date—2022 c 143: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 24, 2022]." [2022 c 143 s 2.]

Effective date—2021 c 257: "This act takes effect January 1, 2022." [2021 c 257 s 2.]

Finding—Intent—2021 c 122: See note following RCW 2.32.050.

Effective date—2021 c 73: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [April 16, 2021]." [2021 c 73 s 2.]

Expiration date—2021 c 73: "This act expires January 1, 2022." [2021 c 73 s 3.]

Intent—2021 c 42: See note following RCW 84.52.070.

Effective date—2019 c 332: See note following RCW 84.56.029.

Findings—2013 c 239: "The legislature finds that it is difficult for many property owners to pay property taxes under the current system where past due property tax payments must be paid in full, including penalties and interest. The legislature further finds that providing counties and property owners some flexibility in structuring past due property tax payments may provide some relief for property owners with delinquent tax payments." [2013 c 239 s 2.]

Part headings not law—2008 c 181: See note following RCW 43.06.220.

Application—2005 c 502 s 7: "Section 7 of this act applies to all taxes levied for collection in 2005 and thereafter." [2005 c 502 s 10.]

Effective date—2005 c 502: See note following RCW 1.12.070.

Effective date—2004 c 161: See note following RCW 28B.10.270.

Applicability—1996 c 153: "This act is effective for taxes levied for collection in 1997 and thereafter." [1996 c 153 s 4.]

Effective date—1988 c 222: See note following RCW 84.40.040.

Effective date—1987 c 211: "This act shall take effect January 1, 1988." [1987 c 211 s 2.]

Applicability—1984 c 131 s 1: "Section 1 of this act applies to taxes payable in 1985 and thereafter." [1984 c 131 s 12.]

Severability—1974 ex.s. c 196: "If any provision of this act, or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act, or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1974 ex.s. c 196 s 9.]

Savings—Severability—1971 ex.s. c 288: See notes following RCW 84.40.030.

Payment of taxes upon loss of exempt status: RCW 84.40.380.