# Property Tax Reductions for Natural Disaster Victims

January 22, 2018 - Over the years we've republished our guide to financial survival for natural disaster victims many times. After the recent California fires, we realized that the guide didn't address the topic of getting property taxes reduced once a disaster has occurred. So until we update the guide again, this article can be used as a guide for victims.

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For most people, property taxes are a substantial bill. Regardless of where you live in the United States, those taxes are based on two things; the value of the land being assessed, and the value of any improvements made to the land. Improvements will of course include your house but there may be additional items included too. Things like pools, landscaping, barns, out-buildings, etcâ€¦ Pretty much anything that isn't natural is considered to be an improvement and is taken into account by your county assessor when determining the taxable value of your property.

Once those improvements have been damaged or destroyed, the value of your property is reduced and you should be entitled to a corresponding reduction in your property taxes. Thatâ€™s' the good news. But just because you've lost your home doesn't mean that your County Assessor is going to reduce your property taxes automatically. In fact you can almost be assured that unless you take action, that won't happen even though there is no doubt that your property is now worth less.

The procedure for reducing your property tax assessment may vary nationwide, but finding out what that procedure is should be fairly simple. Call your County Assessor's Office, explain your situation and ask what you need to do. In all likelihood, you will have to appeal your current assessment. This may involve making an appearance in front of a small board of people to present your case. Bring pictures of your damage with you and, if you have them available, bring pictures to show what your property looked like before it was destroyed.

There is no doubt that this process can be intimidating however it is well worth the effort. The reduction in taxes is likely to save you thousands of dollars annually while you deal with insurance issues and rebuilding.

Depending upon where you live and when your taxes are due, you may also be able to get a grace period to pay those taxes while you go through the appeals process.
byJim Malmberg
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