

Property, income tax reductions may ease pain of flood damage

Tax relief will be available to many people whose property has been harmed by flooding, landslides, windstorms, etc.

Property that has been damaged or destroyed by the recent floods will be eligible for a partial cancellation of 1995-96 property taxes, according to Columbia County Assessor Tom Linhares.

"Many people have suffered terribly during the floods. They shouldn't have to pay the full amount of property taxes on their home if it has been severely damaged or entirely destroyed," Linhares said.

Property taxes reduction is based on the value of the damage that has occurred. The amount is prorated for the number of months the property remains damaged.

Due to extensive damage in the Nehalem Valley, the assessor's office will have representatives at Vernonia City Hall on Wednesday, February 28 between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Applications will be available and appraisers will be on hand to do site visits that same day.

Once an application for proration of taxes has been submitted, an appraiser from the assessor's office will visit the property to determine if it has been destroyed completely or only damaged. The dollar amount of loss is then calculated. If the property cannot be repaired, the amount of taxes for that portion of the value is calculated, then prorated for the number of months left in the fiscal year. In this case, property owners would get up to four months or one-third of the taxes cancelled.

If the property can be repaired, the assessor has to wait until the repairs are completed since the refund is for

only those months that the property remains damaged. Once the owner notifies the assessor that the repairs are complete, the amount of taxes to be canceled can be calculated.

Linhares suggests that property owners wait until they have an estimate of the cost of repairs before they file the application form and that the estimate be attached to the application. Property owners must file their application with the county tax collector by June 30, 1996.

Property owners who have not suffered actual damage but feel the market value of their property has declined because of the flood, may file an appeal with the county Board of Ratio Review between July 1 and 15, 1996.

An application may be obtained by calling the assessor's office (Columbia Co., 397-2240; Clatsop Co., 325-8522; Washington Co., 648-8741) or by picking one up at a county courthouse.

Residents of the Oregon

counties included in the Presidential Disaster Declaration will also be able to deduct qualified casualty losses from their federal income taxes. The loss may be declared on either the 1995 or the 1996 tax return.

Those who want to claim the loss on their 1995 tax re-

turn, but have already filed, must file an amended return.

To obtain immediate processing for returns, the words "Disaster Claim" should be written (preferably in red ink) on the top center of Form 1040. The return should be mailed to: IRS Disaster Claim, PO Box 9941, Mail

Stop 6731, Ogden, UT 84409.

For additional information about casualty losses, obtain IRS Publication 547, "Non-business Disasters, Casualties and Thefts," and Publication 584, "Nonbusiness Disaster, Casualty and Thefts Loss Workbook".

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