



NEWS RELEASE

October 30, 2003

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FROM: Paul McDonnell – Treasurer / Gary Orso - Assessor

RE: Property-tax assistance for fire victims

RIVERSIDE — People whose property has been damaged or devastated by October's firestorm will receive property-tax relief under one of many programs in place to help property owners.

In response to the disaster, Riverside County Treasurer-Tax Collector Paul McDonnell and County Assessor-Clerk-Recorder Gary Orso have teamed up to provide immediate relief for fire victims countywide.

Taxpayers whose property was damaged or destroyed are eligible to have their property reassessed and their Dec. 10, 2003 property-tax payment postponed. Property owners can download a claim form from the county's website at www.co.riverside.ca.us and file the claim for relief at any Assessor or Tax Collector office in the county.

"We stand ready to assist the property owners of Riverside County," Orso said. "We are prepared to move quickly as we all work to get through this difficult time."

Once a claim has been received and verified by Orso's office, the reassessment process will begin. Property values will be reduced to reflect the current valuation of a home or business. If a structure has been destroyed, the assessed value will reflect the value of the land only. If a structure has been damaged but not destroyed, the assessed value will be reduced to a level consistent with the change.

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When the property is rebuilt, the pre-fire valuation will be reapplied to the property, returning the previously assessed value to the tax roll. If the newly rebuilt structure exceeds the previously assessed value, then the Assessor will apply the increased value to the old assessed value and update the tax roll to reflect the change.

In addition to reassessing damaged or destroyed property, the County Treasurer will defer the Dec. 10, 2003 property tax payment until a corrected bill can be issued reflecting the reduced value. To receive a deferral on the Dec. 10 tax payment, a valid claim form must be submitted to the County Assessor prior to the payment due date.

Taxpayers have 12 months to file to have their fire-damaged property reassessed.

“The men and women of our local fire and public safety agencies are working courageously to protect our citizens,” said Treasurer McDonnell. “We owe same effort in offering whatever assistance we can.”

For more information and assistance, please call the County Assessor at 955-6200, County Tax Collector at 955-3900, or visit any of the 11 Assessor or Tax Collector offices throughout the county.

The Assessors and Tax Collectors of San Bernardino, San Diego, Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange and Riverside counties are prepared to move quickly. Collectively they stand ready to assist those who have been hardest hit by the region’s firestorms.

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