

Time is running out for Lee County homeowners to qualify for Hurricane Irma tax break

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(Photo: Andrew West/news-press.com)

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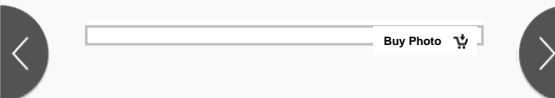
Lee County Property Appraiser Kenneth Wilkinson is again reaching out to people whose property sustained damage during Hurricane Irma and who may be eligible for a tax break.

Under state law, anyone whose property was damaged in the hurricane last September but whose damage wasn't fixed by Jan. 1 of this year is entitled to have their property value adjusted.

In a letter posted on the [appraiser's website](#), Wilkinson reminds taxpayers to review the notice of property tax assessments that will be sent out in a few weeks.

"This is your last opportunity to let our office know so that we can ensure that your 2018 value reflects that damage," Wilkinson wrote. "For those of you that let us know you had damage on January 1, your value will include consideration of that damage."

Wilkinson said questions can be directed to Tabatha Hipp in his office at 239-533-6125 or by email at taxroll@leepa.org.



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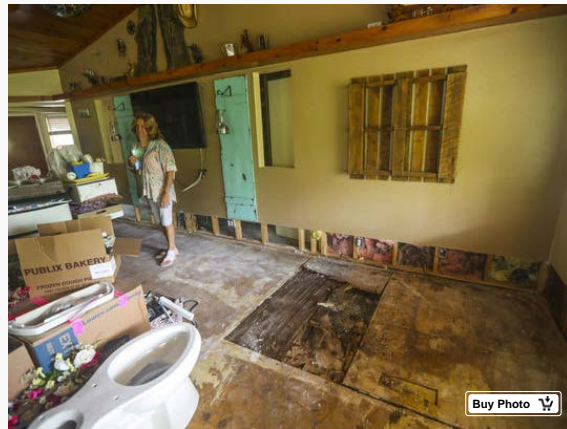
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Rebates for long-term evacuation

Meanwhile, another adjustment to taxes could be coming for people who were forced out of their homes for at least a month due to the hurricanes of 2016 and 2017.

State lawmakers passed a bill late in this year's legislative term that provides a property tax rebate for homeowners whose home were uninhabitable for at least 30 days due to damage from hurricanes Hermine and Matthew in 2016 and Irma in 2017.

Hurricane Hermine formed in the Gulf and moved across northern Florida and the Panhandle into the Atlantic Ocean. Matthew struck the east coast of Florida.



Wendy Peterson's property was flooded including her home. Residents along Bedman Creek were flooded during Hurricane Irma. (Photo: Andrea Melendez/The News-Press)

Southwest Florida took the brunt of Hurricane Irma as it made landfall at Marco Island. Many communities experienced severe flooding after the storm.

Homeowners whose property has a homestead on record may be eligible for a tax rebate for the portion of the year that their home was uninhabitable for 30 days or more. The tax credit does not cover detached utility buildings, carports, pools, bulkheads, fences or land.

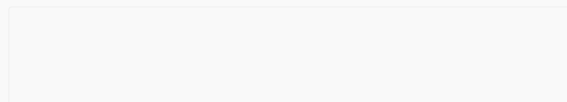
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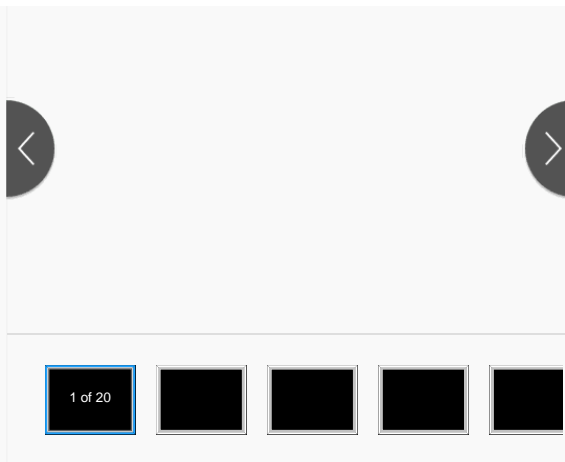
More: [Lee County schools estimates Hurricane Irma damage at \\$21 million](#)

Wilkinson's office is working to integrate a form developed by the state Department of Revenue into office procedures so that eligible homeowners can receive a rebate based on the value of the house on Jan. 1 of the year the hurricane hit, 2017 in the case of Irma, and the number of days the house was uninhabitable.

The law says the property must have been uninhabitable for at least 30 days, but does not specify that the days must be consecutive.

The rebates will apply to taxes for 2019. To be eligible, taxpayers will have to file an application with the property appraiser's office by March 1, 2019.





Acceptable documentation will include utility bills, insurance information, building permit applications and inspection certificates and statements from contractors.

Once affected residents file their abatement applications by March 1, the appraiser must verify the damage and notify the tax collector of the lost value by April 1, 2019. The collector will calculate the rebate under a state formula and issue the tax refund.

One other deadline: To be eligible for the property tax rebate, taxes on a home must have been paid on time.



A number of trees came down at the Edison-Ford Winter Estates as a result of Hurricane Irma. Amy Bennett Williams/news-press

