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Business

Property tax-freeze checks slowly heading to Long Island

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A New York State tax rebate check issued in September 2014 to families who in 2012 had incomes between \$40,000 and \$300,000, and claimed at least one dependent child younger than 17. Photo Credit: Newsday



Property tax-freeze checks from New York State have been delayed for some Long Islanders, particularly those living in Suffolk County, officials said Thursday.

A spokesman for the state Department of Taxation and Finance said 600,000 rebate checks for a portion of school property taxes would eventually reach Nassau and Suffolk counties. "The majority of checks have been issued in Nassau County; remaining checks continue to be mailed daily," he said.

Early last year, state leaders said the checks would be in mailboxes by early November. In July, the tax department put out a fact sheet saying the checks would be mailed "in the fall."

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Five Suffolk homeowners told Newsday recently they had been informed by tax department personnel answering a telephone help-line that the checks would arrive this month or in February.

Asked why residents were getting rebate checks later than those upstate, the spokesman said, "the [tax roll] data from a small percentage of localities, including those on Long Island, is in nonstandard formats that require additional processing time."

The state tax department received the school tax rolls from most municipalities in September 2014; Nassau's were finalized in October and Suffolk's in December.

Jim Davis, acting assessor for Nassau County, said, "this school tax roll is what the school bills are based on in October and what was needed to establish the amount of the rebate check. This happens the same date every year and this past year was no different than any other."

In Suffolk, tax rolls are the responsibility of the towns, according to Vanessa Baird-Streeter, a spokeswoman for Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone.



To be eligible for the Property Tax Freeze Credit program, taxpayers must qualify for a separate program -- the STAR property-tax exemption -- and live outside New York City. Their household income must have been \$500,000 or less in 2013.

Residents of the Bridgehampton and East Hampton school districts aren't eligible because the districts' tax increases in 2014 exceeded a state-imposed tax cap.

The rebate is only on the taxpayer's primary residence, not a vacation place or second home.

The tax department couldn't provide an average amount of the checks now being mailed to Long Islanders; they will total \$1,042 over three years.

To calculate the rebate amount, taxpayers should multiply their 2013 school tax bill by an "inflation factor" of 1.5 percent, or .015. In general, the savings equal the increase in school taxes paid by homeowners.

The program, the brainchild of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and leaders of the State Legislature, will cost state government \$1.5 billion over three years, with \$594 million going to Islanders.

CHECK IT OUT

Homeowners can check their eligibility and when to expect the rebate check here:


518-453-8146

on.ny.gov/WTkMnf

SOURCE: NYS Department of

Taxation and Finance

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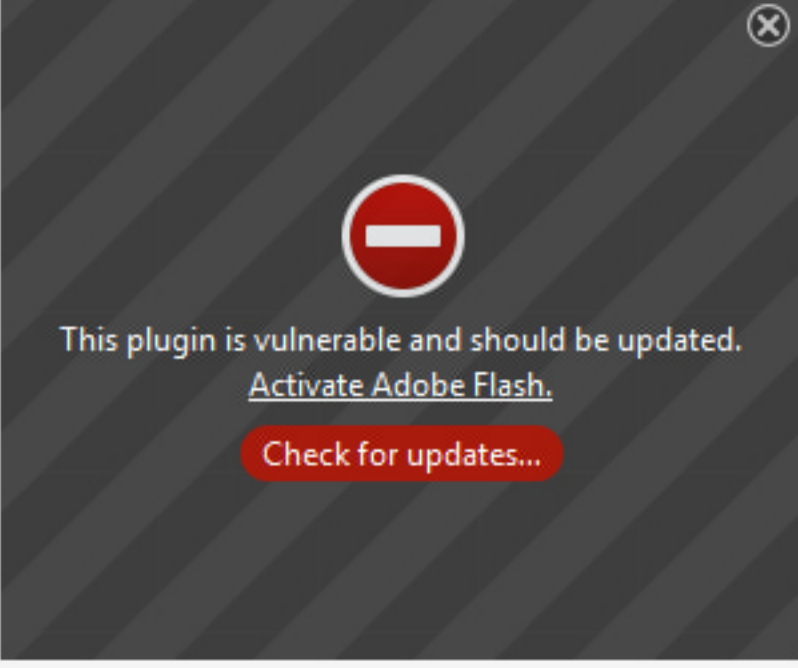
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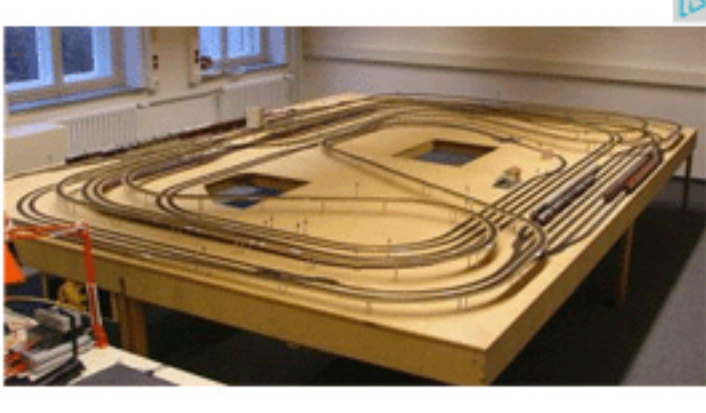
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