



Bruce Elfant, Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector and Voter Registrar

News Release

Communications Division

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Stolen mailed property tax payments, jugging on rise; pay online no later than Tuesday's payment deadline

AUSTIN – Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector Bruce Elfant is urging property owners to pay their property taxes online by Tuesday's deadline to avoid financial penalties and protect against the risk of having their tax payment stolen or falling victim to jugging where crooks are following bank customers to steal their cash when they exit their vehicles.

The best way to protect your money, Elfant said, is to pay your property tax online with an eCheck for \$1 at TravisCountyTax.org.

"The Travis County Sheriff's Office is investigating nine open cases from tax office customers who had their property tax payment stolen from the mail in the 2021 tax year," Elfant said. "Fortunately, our message to avoid payment through the mail has resonated with our customers but unfortunately, many of them are choosing to bring cash to the tax office and they are running the risk of falling victim to jugging."

So far, there are no reports of tax office customers being accosted and robbed of their property tax payment, but the Austin Police Department reports jugging is on the rise. In 2022, the department logged more than 100 jugging incidents where a criminal followed the victim from a bank, ATM or check-cashing store. Once the driver exits the vehicle at the next location, the criminal threatens or assaults the victim to steal the money.

"All I want is for our customers to be empowered with the information they need to protect their hard-earned money from mail fraud and robbery," Elfant said. "Protecting your money includes paying by the deadline to avoid penalty and interest charges." Customers unable to pay their property tax payment in full should use the tax office website to set up a payment plan or send an email to payment.agreements@traviscountytexas.gov.

The safest way to mail a property tax check and to ensure it receives a postmark on or before the deadline is to go into the post office and personally hand the envelope to a postal clerk,

said U.S. Postal Inspector Silvia Torres. Request a “certificate of mailing” that will show the mailed date and ask the clerk to hand cancel the envelope to ensure the postmark reflects the mailing date, she said.

It only cost 40 cents more than a postage stamp to pay online with an eCheck, plus paying online to avoid penalties is available until 11:59 p.m., Tuesday. “But be aware it is not unusual for our online system to slow down the closer it gets to the deadline because too many people try to pay at the same time,” Elfant said. He advises taxpayers to pay online before Tuesday’s deadline to make sure their payment is posted before midnight when state law requires penalty and interest charges be applied to their accounts.

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The **Travis County Tax Office** annually collects more than \$6 billion in local property taxes for 149 local government entities and \$4 million in court fines on behalf of the County Courts, District Courts and Justices of the Peace. The office registers and titles almost 1 million vehicles, registers over 850,000 voters, and supports elections for 201 local government entities. The Tax Office operates six locations in Travis County and many services are available online.