



MAINE REVENUE SERVICES PROPERTY TAX DIVISION PROPERTY TAX BULLETIN NO. 6

TAXATION OF MOBILE HOMES AND CAMPER TRAILERS

REFERENCE: 36 M.R.S. §§ 551, 553, 603, 1481-1491
December 5, 2017; replaces July 14, 2016 revision

The purpose of this bulletin is to explain the way mobile homes and camper trailers are to be taxed by municipalities.

1. Definitions. The following definitions apply with respect to this bulletin.
 - A. Camper trailer. "Camper trailer" means a trailer or semitrailer less than 32 feet long or a popup camper, primarily designed and constructed to provide temporary living quarters for recreational use, camping, or travel. A camper trailer also includes a motorhome.
 - B. Mobile home. "Mobile home" means:
 - (1) A structure, transportable in one or more sections, which is at least eight feet wide, at least 32 feet long, built on a permanent chassis and designed to be used as a dwelling with or without a permanent foundation. A mobile home can connect to utilities and includes plumbing, heating, air conditioning, and electrical systems.
 - (2) A trailer at least 32 feet long and primarily designed and constructed to provide temporary living quarters for recreational use, camping, or travel.

2. General.

The provisions noted in this bulletin cover all mobile homes, including those adapted to commercial use, as well as camper trailers. These provisions do not apply to cargo trailers or truck campers, which are not in any event subject to excise tax, and which are taxable on the same basis as other personal property.

Generally speaking, a mobile home or camper trailer is subject to excise tax if it is to be operated on public roads. For example, if a Maine resident owns a camper trailer and occasionally tows it to a campground (in Maine or elsewhere), that camper trailer is being operated on public roads.

3. Mobile homes.

A. Real estate tax. Mobile homes are subject to real estate tax. The fact that an excise tax has been paid does not render a mobile home exempt from real estate taxation, but the law provides that, where an excise tax has been paid and the mobile home is, later in the year, taxed as real estate, the excise tax paid is allowed as a credit against the real estate tax.

- (1) Where taxable. The property tax should be assessed in the place where the mobile home is located on April 1.
- (2) Description. Mobile homes should be identified, if possible, by make, model and year (and serial number if available). This is so that, if later registration for use on public roads is desired, it can be shown that the property tax was paid on the mobile home to be registered; and that, if an excise tax has been paid, the tax collector will be able to give the proper credit toward the property tax.
- (3) Valuation. When assessed for property taxes, mobile homes should be valued based on just value in the same manner as other real estate in the municipality. The property tax is not limited by what the excise tax might have been, although an extreme variation between the two taxes would be reason to reexamine the property valuation or the basis of computing the excise tax, to make sure no error has been made. The furniture and fixtures of a mobile home should not be included in the valuation unless they are built in, since household furniture is exempt from property taxation.
- (4) Exemptions. Property tax exemptions may also apply to mobile homes. Thus, mobile homes owned by certain eligible veterans, blind persons, benevolent and charitable organizations, literary and scientific institutions, etc., are entitled to exemption from property taxes.

Nonresident servicemembers (military personnel with legal residence outside the State of Maine) are generally not subject to either personal property tax or excise tax, with respect to personal property located in this state, because of the Servicemember's Civil Relief Act ("SCRA"). SCRA includes mobile homes in the definition of personal property. Therefore, even though Maine law considers mobile homes to be real estate, Maine mobile homes owned by nonresident servicemembers are exempt from property tax.

- (5) Enforcement. In view of the ability of owners to move mobile homes, the collector should consider the advisability of using some method other than tax mortgage liens to secure delinquent real estate taxes. While the law requires payment of tax before registration can be obtained (29-A M.R.S. § 409(5)) and before a permit can be issued if the mobile home is to be moved on dealer or transporter plates (29-A M.R.S. § 2382), situations may arise where the lien procedure will be unsatisfactory. In such cases, the collector should consider debt collection through civil action in the court system.

It is illegal to move a mobile home owned by an individual over the highways unless tax is paid. No mobile home shall be moved over highways of this state through use of dealer or transporter plates unless the operator of the vehicle hauling the mobile home has in his or her possession a written certificate from the tax collector of the municipality from which the mobile home is being moved, identifying the mobile home and stating

that all property taxes applicable to the mobile home, including those taxes which have been committed for the current tax year, have been paid, or that the mobile home is exempt from such taxes. The tax year is the period from April 1 through March 31. 29-A §§ 1002(9) and 2382(10).

State police are cooperative in cases where illegal movement over the highways is attempted or suspected. In such cases the municipal officials should get in touch immediately with the nearest State Police barracks, or with headquarters in Augusta.

The operation of this law is more fully covered in Property Tax Bulletin #9 Movement of Mobile Homes by Dealers or Transporters.

- B. Excise tax. The excise tax is a tax for the privilege of operating a mobile home on public roads and applies only where the owner of the mobile home intends to use it on public roads during the year. See 36 M.R.S. § 1482. If the owner of a mobile home intends to operate it on Maine public roads, the mobile home is subject to excise tax. The excise tax applies even after property taxes have been committed to the collector. If property tax has already been paid on a mobile home, the property tax will be allowed as a credit against any excise tax due.

Ordinarily an excise tax will not be due on a mobile home unless the owner intends to register it for use on public roads. If a mobile home is simply being moved from one permanent location to another by a transporter, the mobile home is not subject to excise tax, but a certificate for removal may be necessary. See Bulletin #9 – Movement of Mobile Homes by Dealers or Transporters – for more information.

The excise tax on a mobile home is paid where the mobile home located either at time of payment or April 1, whichever is later.

Tax rate. The excise tax on mobile homes is based on the Manufacturers Suggested Retail Price (“MSRP”), at the rate of 25 mills for the first or current year of model; 20 mills for the second year; 16 mills for the third year; and 12 mills thereafter. 12 mills is the lowest rate at which mobile homes can be taxed. The minimum tax, based on a rate of 12 mills, is \$15.00. If a mobile home is registered after November 1, the applicable excise tax rate is half the regular rate.

Exemptions. Generally, a mobile home owned by an individual, including a veteran, is not entitled to an exemption from excise tax if it is to be registered in Maine for public road use.

Nonresident servicemembers are generally not subject to either personal property tax or excise tax, with respect to personal property located in this state, because of the SCRA. When a servicemember seeks to register a mobile home for public road use, he or she should be referred directly to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, as no action on the part of the tax collector is required. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles will issue a registration for the mobile home.

Credit for excise tax paid. A receipt for excise tax for the current year, issued to the mobile home owner by the tax collector, is necessary to support registration. Since an excise tax previously paid in the same year on a mobile home is to be credited toward a real estate tax later assessed against the mobile home, the property tax collector must verify the excise tax payment. If the owner paid excise tax in a different town, the property tax receipt should also include the name of the town in which the excise tax was paid. If the excise tax is greater than

the real estate tax, credit is given only to the amount of real estate tax; the excess may not be refunded.

- C. Personal property tax. Mobile homes are not subject to personal property tax.
- D. Responsibility of assessors in taxation of mobile homes. The municipal assessor is responsible for assessing the property tax on all mobile homes taxable in the municipality, whether or not an excise tax has been collected.
- E. Responsibility of the excise tax collector. A receipt for excise tax for the current year, issued to the mobile home owner by the tax collector, is necessary to support registration. The excise tax collector is responsible for receiving excise tax payments on a mobile home. After the property tax has been committed to the property tax collector, the tax collector shall allow credit for the property tax paid on the mobile home or camper trailer in question, against the excise tax due.
- F. Responsibility of the property tax collector. Prior to commitment of the property tax, the property tax collector should refer any person seeking to register a mobile home to the excise tax collector. After commitment of the property tax, the property tax collector must first collect any property tax due on the mobile home and then refer the person seeking to register it for use on public roads to the excise tax collector.

4. Camper trailers.

- A. Real estate tax. A camper trailer is taxable as real estate if affixed to the land – for example, if it rests on a foundation. Otherwise a camper trailer is taxable as personal property unless the excise tax has properly been paid.
 - (1) Where taxable. The property tax should be assessed in the place where the affixed camper trailer was located on April 1.
 - (2) Description. When affixed campers are assessed as real estate, they should be identified, if possible, by make, model and year (and serial number if available). This is so that, if later registration is desired, it can be shown that the property tax was paid on the camper trailer to be registered; and that, if an excise tax has been paid on a camper, the tax collector will be able to give the proper credit toward the real estate tax.
 - (3) Valuation. When assessed for property taxes, affixed campers should be valued based on just value in the same manner as other real estate. The property tax is not limited by what the excise tax might have been, although an extreme variation between the two taxes would be reason to reexamine the property valuation or the basis of computing the excise tax, to make sure no error has been made. The furniture and fixtures of an affixed camper trailer should not be included in the valuation unless they are built in, since household furniture is exempt from property taxation.
 - (4) Exemptions. Property tax exemptions may also apply to campers assessed as real estate. Thus, campers owned by certain eligible veterans, blind persons, benevolent and

charitable organizations, literary and scientific institutions, etc., are entitled to exemption from property taxes.

- B. Motor vehicle excise tax. The excise tax is a tax for the privilege of operating a camper trailer on public roads. The excise tax applies even after property taxes have been committed to the collector, if the camper trailer is to be used on public roads. However, after commitment, the property tax will be allowed as a credit against any excise tax due.

If the owner registers a camper trailer and pays excise tax before the property tax commitment date, that camper trailer will be exempt from personal property tax for that year. If a registered camper trailer is subject to real property tax (the camper trailer is affixed to land), the excise tax paid will be applied as a credit against the property tax.

The excise tax on a camper trailer is due where the camper trailer is located either at the time of payment or April 1, whichever is later.

Tax rate. The excise tax on campers is equal to 24 mills on each dollar of the MSRP for the first or current year of model; 17.5 mills for the second year; 13.5 mills for the third year; 10 mills for the fourth year; 6.5 mills for the fifth year and 4 mills for the sixth and succeeding years. The minimum tax for a camper trailer other than a tent trailer is \$15.00. The minimum for a tent trailer is \$5.00.

Exemptions. Generally, no camper trailer owned by an individual, including a veteran entitled to a property tax exemption, is exempt from excise tax if it is to be registered in Maine for public road use.

Campers taxable as personal property, but on which the excise tax has been paid by the same owner before property taxes are committed, are exempt from personal property for the year excise tax is paid.

Nonresident servicemembers are generally not subject to either property tax or excise tax, with respect to personal property located in this state, because of the SCRA. When such a servicemember seeks to register a camper trailer for public road use, he or she should be referred directly to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, as no action on the part of the tax collector is required. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles will issue a registration for the camper trailer.

- C. Personal property tax. The personal property tax applies to a camper trailer if the camper trailer is not affixed to the land or if the excise tax has not been paid prior to commitment of property taxes.
- D. Responsibility of assessors in taxation of campers. The municipal assessor is responsible for assessing all campers subject to the real estate tax and all campers subject to the personal property tax.
- E. Responsibility of the excise tax collector. A receipt for excise tax for the current year, issued to the camper trailer owner by the tax collector, is necessary to support registration. The excise tax collector is responsible for receiving excise tax payments on a camper trailer if the owner wishes to register the camper trailer for use on public roads.

After the property tax has been committed to the property tax collector, the excise tax collector

shall allow credit for the property tax paid on the camper trailer in question, against the excise tax due.

- F. Responsibility of the property tax collector. Prior to commitment of the property tax, the property tax collector should refer any person seeking to pay excise tax on a camper trailer to the excise tax collector. After commitment of the property tax, the property tax collector should first collect any property tax due on the camper trailer in question and then refer the person seeking to register the camper trailer to the excise tax collector.
5. Further questions. If assessors or collectors have any questions regarding the taxation of mobile homes or camper trailers, they may write or call the Property Tax Division, Maine Revenue Services, for further information.

NOTE: This bulletin is intended solely as advice to assist persons in determining, exercising or complying with their legal rights, duties or privileges. If further information is needed, contact the Property Tax Division of Maine Revenue Services.

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