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It's crunch time for property taxes

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You could call the final days of the calendar year the Black Friday of local government.

But whatever you call it, it's the busiest time of the year for the Richland County Treasurer's Office.

"We're always busy this time of year, but we're prepared to handle it," said David Adams, county treasurer.

From December through January, the treasurer's office will collect and process almost 200,000 property tax payments — part of the year-end push by many seeking credit on their 2011 tax returns.

The heavy processing period accounts for the bulk of the more than \$530 million the office collects annually.

In fact, Adams said, barring the flu or an epidemic, staff members are told when they're hired they'll be needed at the end of the year.

"We make it clear we don't approve leave the week after Christmas or going into January," Adams said, laughing.

For an idea of how the end of the year season compares to slower months, Adams said his office received 26,666 individual payments in April and 29,516 payments in May, mostly for vehicle taxes — while December 2010 and January 2011 saw a combined 187,201 payments on everything from boats to vehicles to real estate.

For those who recently have sent the office a payment but haven't heard back yet, there's good news.

"As long as it's postmarked by Dec. 31, you can still receive credit on your 2011 taxes," Adams said. "And you can pay online."

For more information, visit www.rcgov.us/treasurer and click on "Find Your Tax Bill Here."

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