

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS JUNIATA COUNTY



26 NORTH MAIN STREET • P.O. BOX 68
MIFFLINTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA 17059

ASSESSOR'S RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES FOR ENTERING A PROPERTY

An assessor with the Juniata County Assessment Office (the "Assessment Office") is tasked with establishing a value for all the real property located in the jurisdiction in which they are employed. This responsibility includes the obligation to view a property and the improvements located thereon, if any.

Below is the policy that Juniata County and the Assessment Office have adopted concerning the rights and procedures of an assessor when entering a property. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with all local, state, and federal laws, as well as to protect the safety and welfare of the public and the assessor.

- An assessor may enter onto your property without explicit permission as long as the entry is limited to the land and yard immediately surrounding a home or other buildings located on the property; however, an assessor will never enter into a building or other structure without the express consent from the property owner, and even with such consent, only in very limited circumstances.
- **An assessor accessing the land and yard immediately surrounding a home or other buildings located on the property is not violating the Fourth (4th) Amendment. An assessment is not defined as a "search" as the assessor is only making observations of a structure's plainly visible exterior attributes and dimensions without entering or looking into the structure.**
- An assessor will never enter a house, dwelling, or other buildings unless that assessor has received express consent from the property owner and approval from an Assessment Office supervisor. In addition to the above protocol, should a property owner contact the Assessment Office requesting an interior inspection, the Assessment office may require the assessor to be accompanied by another assessor or Assessment Office staff personnel.
- If the property is not owner-occupied, an assessor may access the property without the express consent of the tenant if the assessor has obtained the express consent from the property owner.

- An assessor will access a property by the most easily accessible means. If a property owner is not home when the assessor visits the property, the assessor shall leave a card at the most accessible entrance of the property in order to notify the property owner of the visit, and, if required, request the property owner to contact the assessor to provide additional information.

Assessors will follow the general guidelines set forth below when visiting a property:

- 1) **ALWAYS** carry a county-issued photo identification card prominently displayed.
- 2) Identify himself or herself as a Juniata County assessor and state the reason for the visit.
- 3) Ring the doorbell, knock on the door, and allow a reasonable time for the property owner to respond. If no response is forthcoming, the assessor may walk around the property to inspect it.
- 4) If no one is home during the assessor's visit, the assessor shall leave a card at the property's most easily accessible entrance requesting the owner to contact the assessor or return the card, if additional information is needed. **If no contact is made by the owner, the assessor may make additional visits to the property or base improvements, if warranted, on estimated data.**
- 5) If a person responds to the assessor's attempt to announce/identify themselves at the time of the visit, the assessor will use his or her best judgment to determine whether the person so answering has the authority to grant the assessor entry onto the property. Property owners should undertake efforts to instruct non-property owners such as other household members, housekeepers, cleaners, or maintenance staff whether or not such individuals have authority to allow the assessor to access the property.
- 6) **If requested to leave the property, the assessor will do so immediately.**
- 7) The assessor will use all best efforts to collect information from an exterior inspection and dialogue with the property owner. An assessor will never enter your house, dwelling, or other buildings unless that assessor has received express consent from the property owner and approval from an Assessment Office supervisor.
- 8) In the case of new construction, the assessor will follow the same procedure set forth above.

If the assessor is denied access to any portion of the property, or the property is inaccessible, the assessor will base the change in assessment on what can be observed from the outside of the property, or from the street. Any data collected in this manner will be estimated and may not be 100% accurate.

An assessor is not a law enforcement officer, and as a result, the assessor will not be visiting the property to conduct a criminal investigation. If, however, the assessor does observe criminal activity, the assessor may be required to report such activity to the Chief Assessor or Assistant Chief Assessor.

Should, at any time, the assessor believes their safety is in jeopardy, they will immediately leave the property and report the incident to the appropriate authority, if warranted.