

**ALAMEDA COUNTY  
SUPPLEMENTAL  
ASSESSMENT PRACTICES SURVEY**

**JULY 2003**

---

**CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION**

CAROLE MIGDEN, SAN FRANCISCO  
BILL LEONARD, ONTARIO  
CLAUDE PARRISH, LONG BEACH  
JOHN CHIANG, LOS ANGELES  
STEVE WESTLY, SACRAMENTO

FIRST DISTRICT  
SECOND DISTRICT  
THIRD DISTRICT  
FOURTH DISTRICT  
STATE CONTROLLER

---

TIMOTHY W. BOYER, INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION  
PROPERTY AND SPECIAL TAXES DEPARTMENT  
450 N STREET, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA  
PO BOX 942879, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 94279-0062  
916 324-5827 • FAX 916 323-5689  
www.boe.ca.gov

CAROLE MIGDEN  
First District, San Francisco

BILL LEONARD  
Second District, Ontario

CLAUDE PARRISH  
Third District, Long Beach

JOHN CHIANG  
Fourth District, Los Angeles

STEVE WESTLY  
Controller, Sacramento

TIMOTHY W. BOYER  
Interim Executive Director

No. 2003/049

July 28, 2003

TO COUNTY ASSESSORS:

ALAMEDA COUNTY  
SUPPLEMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRACTICES SURVEY

A copy of the Alameda County Supplemental Assessment Practices Survey Report is enclosed for your information. The Board of Equalization (BOE) completed this survey in fulfillment of the provisions of sections 15640-15646 of the Government Code. These code sections provide that the BOE shall make surveys in each county and city and county to determine that the practices and procedures used by the county assessor in the valuation of properties are in conformity with all provisions of law.

The Honorable Ron Thomsen, Alameda County Assessor, was provided a draft of this report and given an opportunity to discuss the report with BOE staff. Pursuant to Government Code section 15646, this report is distributed to the Governor, the Attorney General, the State Legislature, and the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Grand Jury, and Assessment Appeals Board.

The BOE's County Property Tax Division staff performed initial fieldwork for this supplemental survey of the Alameda County Assessor's Office during June 2002 and follow-up fieldwork in April 2003. This report does not reflect changes implemented by the assessor after the fieldwork was completed.

The survey process inherently requires the interruption of normal office work routines. We thank Mr. Thomsen and his staff for their cooperation and patience during this assessment practices survey.

These survey reports give government officials in California charged with property tax administration the opportunity to exchange ideas for the mutual benefit of all participants and stakeholders. We encourage you to share your questions, comments, and suggestions for improvement with us.

Sincerely,

/s/ David J. Gau

David J. Gau  
Deputy Director  
Property and Special Taxes Department

DJG:jm  
Enclosure

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SCOPE OF SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>REAL PROPERTY VALUATION AND ASSESSMENT: RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONSES, AND CURRENT STATUS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
TRAINING .....	4
DISASTER RELIEF .....	4
NEW CONSTRUCTION.....	5
CALIFORNIA LAND CONSERVATION ACT.....	6
WATER COMPANY PROPERTY .....	8
TAXABLE POSSESSORY INTERESTS .....	8
TENANT IMPROVEMENTS .....	9
<b>BUSINESS AND PERSONAL PROPERTY VALUATION AND ASSESSMENT: RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONSES, AND CURRENT STATUS.....</b>	<b>10</b>
PROPERTY STATEMENT PROCESSING.....	10
EQUIPMENT VALUATION FACTORS.....	11
AUDIT PROGRAM .....	11
AIRCRAFT.....	12
VESSELS .....	12
MANUFACTURED HOUSING.....	13
<b>APPENDICIES.....</b>	<b>14</b>
A. COUNTY PROPERTY TAX DIVISION SURVEY GROUP .....	14
B. RELEVANT STATUTES AND REGULATIONS.....	15
<b>ASSESSOR'S RESPONSE TO BOE'S FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>18</b>

## **INTRODUCTION**

Although county government has the primary responsibility for local property tax assessment, the State has both a public policy interest and a financial interest in promoting fair and equitable assessments throughout California. The public policy interest arises from the impact of property taxes on taxpayers and the inherently subjective nature of the assessment process. The financial interest comes from the fact that half or more of all property tax revenues are used to fund public schools and the State is required to backfill any shortfalls from that property tax funding.

The assessment practices survey program is one of the State's major efforts to promote uniformity, fairness, equity, and integrity in the property tax assessment process. Under this program, the State Board of Equalization (BOE) periodically reviews (surveys) every county assessor's office at five-year intervals and publishes a report of its findings.

The BOE has also elected to conduct a supplemental survey of this county. Supplemental surveys, conducted at least one year after publication of the original report, are made to determine the extent to which the assessor has implemented the recommendations contained in the original report.

The most recent assessment practices survey report for Alameda County was published in April 2001. That report included the assessor's initial response to the recommendations contained in it. This report reflects the BOE's findings in its supplemental survey of the Alameda County Assessor's Office. The BOE's County Property Tax Division staff performed initial fieldwork for this supplemental survey of the Alameda County Assessor's Office during June 2002 and follow-up fieldwork in April 2003.

## **SCOPE OF SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY**

A supplemental assessment practices survey is not an audit of the assessor's entire operation; it is a review of the assessor's efforts to implement the recommendations made in the BOE's most recent survey report. New issues were not explored.

This supplemental survey of the assessor's office included a review of the assessor's written response to the recommendations contained in the survey report, a review of the assessor's current records pertaining to those recommendations, and interviews with the assessor and his staff. This report evaluates the progress that the assessor has made in addressing the problems identified in the survey report published in April 2001. It also notes areas where problems persist.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In our April 2001 *Alameda County Assessment Practices Survey Report*, we made 14 recommendations for changes to the following areas of the real property assessment program: disaster relief, new construction, California Land Conservation Act (CLCA), water company property, possessory interests, and tenant improvements. The assessor has fully implemented 11 of these recommendations and not implemented two of them. One of the recommendations pertained to appraiser training. Since appraiser training is monitored by a separate BOE unit, it is not addressed in this report.

We also made nine recommendations for changes to six areas of the assessor's business and personal property assessment programs: property statement processing, valuation factors, audit program, aircraft, vessels, and manufactured housing. The assessor has fully implemented six of the recommendations, partially implemented one, and not implemented two.

## **REAL PROPERTY VALUATION AND ASSESSMENT: RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONSES, AND CURRENT STATUS**

Following, are the original recommendations from the BOE's April 2001 Assessment Practices Survey Report and the assessor's responses to them. After each recommendation, we report the current status of the assessor's effort to implement the recommendation, as noted during our supplemental survey fieldwork.

### ***Training***

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** Ensure that appraisers meet the section 671 annual training requirements.

#### **Assessor's Response:**

*We concur that all appraisers should meet their section 671 annual training requirements and thank the survey team for recognizing that our training deficits have improved markedly due to the assessor's active response to prior BOE training reports. We will continue our efforts in this area to ensure full compliance with this recommendation.*

#### **Current Status:**

The annual training requirement is monitored by the BOE's Assessment Policy and Standards Division; therefore, we did not review the assessor's implementation of this recommendation.

### ***Disaster Relief***

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** Allocate disaster relief values in proportion to the existing base year land and improvement values.

#### **Assessor's Response:**

*On properties that have a base year established by an appraisal of the individual components, we agree and it is our policy to provide calamity relief against the existing base year value without adjustments to the land and improvement allocation.*

*A base year value established by a change in ownership, however, is based on the market value of the real property in its entirety and not an appraisal of the individual land and improvement components. In these cases, our initial allocation may or may not have any relation to the actual market value of either individual component.*

*Our policy therefore is to examine the allocation made for these types of base year values and to make adjustments as appropriate before providing damage relief. By examining our allocation and adjusting the allocation where warranted before providing the calamity relief, we provide the taxpayer with the greatest intended amount of relief authorized under section 170, not relief based on an arbitrary allocation made at the time of purchase.*

**Current Status:**

This recommendation has not been implemented. We found that the assessor's procedures manual section on calamity application processing has been revised, but the procedure still directs that a reallocation of land and improvement values on the roll may be appropriate. This reallocation is done whenever the land and improvement value ratio reflected in the market value appraisal in the undamaged condition at the time of the calamity provides greater relief to the applicant.

**New Construction**

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** Obtain all building permits from all permit-issuing agencies.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We agree. We have identified the agency that did not send electrical, plumbing or mechanical permits with their regular monthly permit list and have requested that they begin sending these permits as well. Also, we have identified the agencies in Alameda County that potentially could issue "water well" permits. We have contacted these agencies and requested that copies of all "water well" permits be sent to our department.*

**Current Status:**

This recommendation has been implemented. The assessor receives all building permits from all 14 cities and the county. Each month, a checklist is used to confirm receipt of permits from these agencies. If permits are not received, the agency is called and reminded. This process has been effective and cooperation from permit-issuing agencies has been good.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** Record all building permit activity on appraisal records.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We agree that having all permits noted on the record would be useful. As time and staffing levels allow, we are complying with this recommendation.*

**Current Status:**

This recommendation has been implemented. Our review indicates that building permit data for assessable activities are now being entered on the appraisal records.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** Assess all construction in progress at market value on each lien date.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We agree that all construction in progress should be assessed at market value on each lien date and believe our staff consistently follows that policy. It is possible that the survey team did not review the Property Permit Records, which detail the appraisers' observations on successive lien*

*dates until completion of construction occurs. Appraisal judgment must be applied to determine if construction in progress on lien date adds value. In some instances, construction in its beginning stages such as a foundation may only detract from the market value of the property. This is true if it is likely that a potential buyer would choose a different floor plan or the construction does not conform to the highest and best use of the property. Caution should always be used when adding value for construction in progress on lien date that is not clearly measurable.*

**Current Status:**

This recommendation has been implemented. We found that properties with construction in progress are assigned a code in the computer system, which designates that they should be worked each lien date. Additionally, this workload is monitored with computer-generated reports to ensure that the properties are reviewed annually. We sampled properties with construction in progress and found they were assessed at market value on the lien date.

**California Land Conservation Act (CLCA)**

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** Assess all vines and vineyard improvements and initiate roll corrections for escape assessments.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. We have made this a priority for the agricultural appraiser, and have begun to implement this recommendation.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. We found that the assessor undertook a major project to update all vineyard properties. Every property with vines was identified, inventoried, and appraised. Where vines or vineyard improvements had previously escaped assessment, roll corrections were processed and values were updated.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:** Ensure that restricted living improvement values are not improperly subject to the annual CCPI adjustment.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. Correct valuation procedures for CLCA living improvements are being incorporated into our new computer system. The CLCA module is scheduled for implementation later this year. Until this module is implemented, the agricultural appraiser will manually review restricted living improvement values.*

**Current Status:**

This recommendation has been implemented.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** Establish base year values for CLCA property.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. As with Recommendation 6, this has been made a priority for the agricultural appraiser, and are implementing this recommendation.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. We found that base year values for vines on vineyard properties were established as of the year they became taxable.

**RECOMMENDATION 9:** Uniformly assess homesites on CLCA property.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. We are drafting a CLCA homesite assessment procedure for inclusion in our procedure manual.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. We found that the assessor has drafted new sections for the procedures manual and has assigned a single appraiser to assess homesites on CLCA property. This appraiser has been trained to properly and consistently value homesites. We noted no inconsistencies in our review.

**RECOMMENDATION 10:** Send annual CLCA questionnaires to property owners.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur that these properties should be surveyed periodically. We currently survey CLCA properties at the time of a change in ownership. We will periodically survey owners of other CLCA properties to discover and value compatible uses. This function is being included in our pending new computer system, which will automatically generate the questionnaires.*

**Current Status:**

This recommendation has not been implemented. The assessor has not conducted an annual survey of land rents or compatible uses since 1994. A newly revised questionnaire for rural properties is being drafted. It is anticipated this questionnaire will be mailed periodically starting in the near future.

**RECOMMENDATION 11:** Use available BOE forms to aid in the discovery of taxable property on agricultural land.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We agree that the forms specifically designed for agricultural properties are more pertinent to the value of agricultural properties and are helpful in discovering other taxable property. We will begin using the agricultural property statements for the current reporting cycle.*

**Current Status:**

This recommendation has been implemented. We found that the business property division now sends out Form BOE-571-F, *Agricultural Property Statement*, to farms, wineries, and ranches with business property accounts. For the 2001-02 assessment year, 43 of these property statements were mailed.

***Water Company Property***

**RECOMMENDATION 12:** Review annual county and State water supply source reports to discover assessable water company properties.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We annually review the CPUC web site to discover any new water companies operating in Alameda County. We have obtained the State Department of Health Services annual report and are in the process of contacting the property owners of the 32 water supply sources to determine their status.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. We found that the assessor now obtains the State Department of Health Services annual report and uses the report to discover assessable water supply properties.

***Taxable Possessory Interests***

**RECOMMENDATION 13:** Assess all taxable possessory interests unless they qualify for the low-value property exemption.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. We will enroll all possessory interests unless they qualify for the low value exemption.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. We found that the assessor issued a memorandum to possessory interest appraisers affirming his policy to assess all taxable

possessory interests not excluded by the low-value exemption adopted by a resolution of the board of supervisors. We reviewed a listing of enrolled low-value taxable possessory interests. Current practice is consistent with statutes, the county ordinances, and the assessor's stated procedures.

***Tenant Improvements***

**RECOMMENDATION 14:** Ensure that staff appraisers are aware of and follow business property statement processing policies and procedures.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. We have reminded our staff of the importance of following our business property statement processing policies and procedures.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation, and he states that this issue is emphasized in policy review seminars with staff before the property statement processing season. We found that the assessor has clear written policies explaining under what circumstances a property statement should be referred to the real property division for review. We noted a number of referrals to the real property division.

## **BUSINESS AND PERSONAL PROPERTY VALUATION AND ASSESSMENT: RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONSES, AND CURRENT STATUS**

Following are the original recommendations from our April 2001 survey report and the assessor's responses to them, followed by the current status of the assessor's efforts to implement the recommendations.

### ***Property Statement Processing***

**RECOMMENDATION 15:** Screen property statements to ensure they have the proper signatures.

#### **Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. We have reminded our staff of the importance and legal requirements of obtaining proper signatures on property statements, and have implemented procedures to ensure compliance with this recommendation.*

#### **Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. We found that the assessor has clear written policies in place for both the support and professional staff concerning who may execute a property statement. The assessor states that these policies are carefully reviewed with staff before the assessment season. We reviewed a number of 2002 property statements and found no instances of inappropriate signatures.

**RECOMMENDATION 16:** Properly classify and assess apartment personal property.

#### **Assessor's Response:**

*We concur that all apartment personal property should be separately assessed from land and improvement assessments and have implemented a procedure to ensure that personal property is correctly classified.*

#### **Current Status:**

The assessor has not implemented this recommendation. We found that the assessor has drafted and issued a new policy pertaining to the assessment of apartment personal property, but it will not be implemented until 2003.

### **Equipment Valuation Factors**

**RECOMMENDATION 17:** Discontinue the use of arbitrary minimum percent good factors.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We respectfully disagree with the description of minimum valuation factors as "arbitrary." Application of the cost approach in mass appraisal of fixtures and personal property is based on the application of price trend and percent good factors, as the SBE report states. However, the percent good factor assumes that all of the value is measured by the income the asset produces over its anticipated service life. In fact, most equipment has scrap or salvage value at the time it is removed from service. This value is not measured in the percent good calculation and becomes an important component of the total value as the property nears the end of its service life. Appraisal articles suggest that scrap or salvage value ranges from 5 to 15 percent of Replacement Cost New.*

*The California Assessors' Association recommends a specific minimum percent good for several classes of property, which we have adopted.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has not implemented this recommendation. We found that the assessor continues to use the policy guidelines issued by the California Assessors' Association pertaining to the use of minimum percent good factors. These guidelines are not consistent with the BOE Assessors' Handbook Section 581, *Equipment Index and Percent Good Factors*.<sup>1</sup>

### **Audit Program**

**RECOMMENDATION 18:** Complete all mandatory audits required by section 469.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. For the 1998-99 fiscal year, the audit-appraisal staff timely completed 95 percent of the audit workload. With the hard work and dedication of our audit staff we are confident that we will timely complete 100 percent of our mandatory audit workload in the future.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. We found that 11 mandatory audits for 2001-02 were not completed, but all had waivers of the statute of limitations in place. Accordingly, no revenue will be lost nor appropriate refunds denied assuming the audits are completed within the waiver period.

---

<sup>1</sup> Subsequent to our fieldwork, the Governor approved AB 2714 (Ch. 299, Stats. 2002). This act, which will be effective for the 2003 lien date, provides that an assessor may not depreciate personal property or trade fixtures using minimum percent good factors that are determined in an unsupported manner. Our review for this supplemental survey did not address whether the assessor's current methodology complies with this new requirement.

**Aircraft**

**RECOMMENDATION 19:** Review and update zero-value aircraft accounts.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We have scheduled reviews of the zero value accounts in the spring. The final review will be in June, just prior to roll closure. This will ensure that all assessable aircraft are enrolled timely.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation.

**RECOMMENDATION 20:** Verify an aircraft's condition before granting a reduction in assessment.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. We have implemented a policy to request supporting documentation to verify an aircraft's condition before granting a reduction in assessment.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. We found that the assessor has modified the instructions on aircraft reduction-in-assessment request forms to require supporting documentation from a third party. This documentation must be from an aircraft service facility or other qualified individual/facility.

**Vessels**

**RECOMMENDATION 21:** Apply the 10 percent penalty to all *Vessel Property Statement* late filers and non-filers, pursuant to section 463.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. Our new assessment management system is being programmed to incorporate the penalty automatically and comply with the legal requirements of Property Tax Rules 261 and 252.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. We reviewed a sample of vessel appraisal records and found no instances of penalties being inappropriately omitted.

**RECOMMENDATION 22:** Implement the section 275.5 reduced documented vessel exemption for late-filed exemptions.

**Assessor's Response:**

*We concur. We have reminded our staff that the full vessel exemption is not to be granted unless timely filed.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has implemented this recommendation. In our review of vessel exemption claims, we found no instances of the exemption being granted inappropriately.

***Manufactured Housing***

**RECOMMENDATION 23:** Annually assess manufactured homes at the lesser of their factored base year value or full cash value.

**Assessor's Response:**

*An improved assessment management system is under development which will incorporate a manufactured home valuation module allowing for the rapid annual review of all manufactured home values to ensure their assessment is at the lower of market value or factored base year value. Until that system is in place, we will annually review manufactured home assessments individually.*

**Current Status:**

The assessor has partially implemented this recommendation. We found that the assessor now annually reviews the values for manufactured homes and reduces values by a fixed amount according to a depreciation study performed using the *Kelley Blue Book Official Manufactured Housing Guide*. This assures that the assessed value is lower than factored base year value. Full implementation, the goal of the assessor, will require comparing the assessed value for each manufactured home with the value stated in the above-mentioned guide.

## **APPENDICIES**

### ***A. County Property Tax Division Survey Group***

#### ***Alameda County Supplemental Survey***

##### ***Chief, County Property Tax Division:***

Mickie Stuckey

##### ***Survey Program Director:***

Benjamin Tang

Principal Property Appraiser

##### ***Supplemental Survey Team:***

John Corum

Senior Specialist Property Auditor Appraiser

Sally Boeck

Senior Specialist Property Appraiser

Tom McClaskey

Associate Property Appraiser

**B. Relevant Statutes and Regulations**

**Government Code**

**15640. Survey by board of county assessment procedures.**

- (a) The State Board of Equalization shall make surveys in each county and city and county to determine the adequacy of the procedures and practices employed by the county assessor in the valuation of property for the purposes of taxation and in the performance generally of the duties enjoined upon him or her.
- (b) The surveys shall include a review of the practices of the assessor with respect to uniformity of treatment of all classes of property to ensure that all classes are treated equitably, and that no class receives a systematic overvaluation or undervaluation as compared to other classes of property in the county or city and county.
- (c) The surveys may include a sampling of assessments from the local assessment rolls. Any sampling conducted pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 15643 shall be sufficient in size and dispersion to insure an adequate representation therein of the several classes of property throughout the county.
- (d) In addition, the board may periodically conduct statewide surveys limited in scope to specific topics, issues, or problems requiring immediate attention.
- (e) The board's duly authorized representatives shall, for purposes of these surveys, have access to, and may make copies of, all records, public or otherwise, maintained in the office of any county assessor.
- (f) The board shall develop procedures to carry out its duties under this section after consultation with the California Assessors' Association. The board shall also provide a right to each county assessor to appeal to the board appraisals made within his or her county where differences have not been resolved before completion of a field review and shall adopt procedures to implement the appeal process.

**15641. Audit of Records; Appraisal Data Not Public.**

In order to verify the information furnished to the assessor of the county, the board may audit the original books of account, wherever located; of any person owning, claiming, possessing or controlling property included in a survey conducted pursuant to this chapter when the property is of a type for which accounting records are useful sources of appraisal data.

No appraisal data relating to individual properties obtained for the purposes of any survey under this chapter shall be made public, and no state or local officer or employee thereof gaining knowledge thereof in any action taken under this chapter shall make any disclosure with respect thereto except as that may be required for the purposes of this chapter. Except as specifically provided herein, any appraisal data may be disclosed by the board to any assessor, or by the board or the assessor to the assessee of the property to which the data relate.

The board shall permit an assessee of property to inspect, at the appropriate office of the board, any information and records relating to an appraisal of his or her property, including "market data" as defined in Section 408. However, no information or records, other than "market data," which relate to the property or business affairs of a person other than the assessee shall be disclosed.

Nothing in this section shall be construed as preventing examination of that data by law enforcement agencies, grand juries, boards of supervisors, or their duly authorized agents, employees, or representatives conducting an investigation of an assessor's office pursuant to Section 25303, and other duly authorized legislative or administrative bodies of the state pursuant to their authorization to examine that data.

**15642. Research by board employees.**

The board shall send members of its staff to the several counties and cities and counties of the state for the purpose of conducting that research it deems essential for the completion of a survey report pursuant to Section 15640 with respect to each county and city and county. The survey report shall show the volume of assessing work to be done as measured by the various types of property to be assessed and the number of individual assessments to be made, the responsibilities devolving upon the county assessor, and the extent to which assessment practices are consistent with or differ from state law and regulations. The report may also show the county assessor's requirements for maps, records, and other equipment and supplies essential to the adequate performance of his or her duties, the number and classification of personnel needed by him or her for the adequate conduct of his or her office, and the fiscal outlay required to secure for that office sufficient funds to ensure the proper performance of its duties.

**15643. When surveys to be made.**

- (a) The board shall proceed with the surveys of the assessment procedures and practices in the several counties and cities and counties as rapidly as feasible, and shall repeat or supplement each survey at least once in five years.
- (b) The surveys of the 10 largest counties and cities and counties shall include a sampling of assessments on the local assessment rolls as described in Section 15640. In addition, the board shall each year, in accordance with procedures established by the board by regulation, select at random at least three of the remaining counties or cities and counties, and conduct a sample of assessments on the local assessment roll in those counties. If the board finds that a county or city and county has "significant assessment problems," as provided in Section 75.60 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, a sample of assessments will be conducted in that county or city and county in lieu of a county or city and county selected at random. The 10 largest counties and cities and counties shall be determined based upon the total value of locally assessed property located in the counties and cities and counties on the lien date that falls within the calendar year of 1995 and every fifth calendar year thereafter.
- (c) The statewide surveys which are limited in scope to specific topics, issues, or problems may be conducted whenever the board determines that a need exists to conduct a survey.
- (d) When requested by the legislative body or the assessor of any county or city and county to perform a survey not otherwise scheduled, the board may enter into a contract with the requesting local agency to conduct that survey. The contract may provide for a board sampling of assessments on the local roll. The amount of the contracts shall not be less than the cost to the board, and shall be subject to regulations approved by the Director of General Services.

**15644. Recommendations by board.**

The surveys shall incorporate reviews of existing assessment procedures and practices as well as recommendations for their improvement in conformity with the information developed in the surveys as to what is required to afford the most efficient assessment of property for tax purposes in the counties or cities and counties concerned.

**15645. Survey report; final survey report; assessor's report.**

- (a) Upon completion of a survey of the procedures and practices of a county assessor, the board shall prepare a written survey report setting forth its findings and recommendations and transmit a copy to the assessor. In addition the board may file with the assessor a confidential report containing matters relating to personnel.

Before preparing its written survey report, the board shall meet with the assessor to discuss and confer on those matters which may be included in the written survey report.

- (b) Within 30 days after receiving a copy of the survey report, the assessor may file with the board a written response to the findings and recommendations in the survey report. The board may, for good cause, extend the period for filing the response.
- (c) The survey report, together with the assessor's response, if any, and the board's comments, if any, shall constitute the final survey report. The final survey report shall be issued by the board within two years after the date the board began the survey. Within a year after receiving a copy of the final survey report, and annually thereafter, no later than the date on which the initial report was issued by the board and until all issues are resolved, the assessor shall file with the board of supervisors a report, indicating the manner in which the assessor has implemented, intends to implement, or the reasons for not implementing the recommendations of the survey report, with copies of that response being sent to the Governor, the Attorney General, the State Board of Equalization, the Senate and Assembly and to the grand juries and assessment appeals boards of the counties to which they relate.

**15646. Copies of final survey reports to be filed with local officials.**

Copies of final survey reports shall be filed with the Governor, Attorney General, and with the assessors, the boards of supervisors, the grand juries and assessment appeals boards of the counties to which they relate, and to other assessors of the counties unless one of these assessors notifies the State Board of Equalization to the contrary and, on the opening day of each regular session, with the Senate and Assembly.

## **ASSESSOR'S RESPONSE TO BOE'S FINDINGS**

As noted in the Introduction to this report, the most recent assessment practices survey report for Alameda County was published April 2001 and included the assessor's initial response to the findings and recommendations contained in that report. The assessor also elected to file a response to this supplemental survey. His response begins on the next page.



# OFFICE OF ASSESSOR COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

1221 Oak St., County Administration Building  
Oakland, California 94612-4288  
(510) 272-3755 / FAX (510) 272-3803

**RON THOMSEN**  
ASSESSOR

June 16, 2003

State Board of Equalization  
Mickie Stuckey, Chief  
County Property Tax Division  
P.O. Box 942879  
Sacramento, CA 94279-0062

Dear Ms. Stuckey:

In accordance with California Government Code section 15645, I am pleased to respond to the State Board of Equalization's Supplemental Assessment Practices Survey Report of Alameda County. The Assessment Practices Survey program is a valuable process that promotes uniformity, fairness, equity and integrity in the property tax assessment process.

I would like to express my appreciation to you and the survey team for recognizing our accomplishments in implementing many of the recommended changes made in the initial report. In regard to the three recommendations (2, 10 and 17) that have not been implemented, our position does not change from those made in our response to the initial survey report.

I appreciate the professionalism shown by the State Board supplemental survey staff, John Corum, Sally Boeck and Tom McClaskey during this process. I would also like to acknowledge my staff for their continuing efforts to provide the highest level of assessment services to the citizens of Alameda County.

Sincerely,

/s/ Ron Thomsen

Ron Thomsen  
Assessor

RT:dmg