1

I.   New Features

As always, we've been working on improving the program by trying to streamline and simplify the way things are done. Here are some of the changes you may notice:

- We are also using freshdesk to keep track of support issues. When you email support@townsoft.com, a ticket will be created. (The first time you do so you'll be asked some additional questions.) You can keep track of what is going on with that ticket through freshdesk, but it is mainly a way for us to keep track of what needs to happen.

II.   Start of Collection/ Maintenance Functions

This is a list of the procedures necessary to load data at the beginning of a collection. Some of these steps are useful during the collection season.

A. Back up data
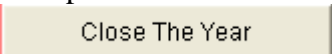
1. On the main screen of the program click on **Do These Steps Daily**
2. There are two backup options from within the program, Internet Backup and File Backup.
   a. The File Backup will backup your tax data in a place you specify on your computer. Make sure it is not in your data folder.
   b. The Internet Backup will backup your tax data to our web server.
      i. This is only available to customers with Internet Lookup.
      ii. Valuable in case of a computer failure.
      iii. Useful to our staff in diagnosing and fixing problems.

B. Update tax program

Note: Make sure that you are connected to the Internet for this step. This will need to be done for each computer, one at a time. If you need to manually update, go to www.townsoft.com, click on Software Updates and Download the latest version of Wintax.
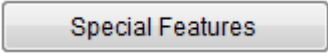
1. On the main screen of the program click **Update Tax Program**
2. Click **Download & Install Latest Version** and wait for the download to finish.
   a. The tax program will close and a new window will open.
   b. Click on **Install**.
   c. When the window disappears, re-open the tax program.

C. Close the year

1. At the top of the main screen, choose Setup/Year End.
2. On the Start Of Collection tab, click **Close The Year**
3. Make sure the year to close is appropriate, then click on **Close the Year**

4. Next click on [I'm Sure!!! Close the year!]
5. The program will close when the operation is complete.
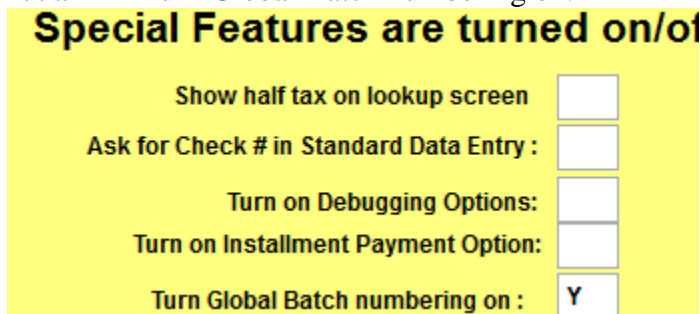
D. Reset the batch number

1. At the top of the main screen, click on Setup/Year End.
2. Click [Special Features]
3. Put a Y in Turn Global Batch numbering on.

Special Features are turned on/of
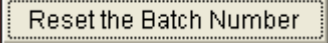
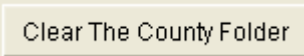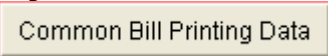|	
Show half tax on lookup screen	
Ask for Check # in Standard Data Entry :	
Turn on Debugging Options:	
Turn on Installment Payment Option:	
Turn Global Batch numbering on :	Y
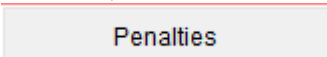
4. Click [Reset the Batch Number]
5. Reset the batch back to your beginning number. If you don't use a lockbox, reset to 1. If you do use a lockbox, reset to 5000 or some other large number.

E. Clear the County Folder

1. At the top of the main screen, click on Setup/Year End.
2. On the Start Of Collection tab, click [Clear The County Folder]
3. Click [Clear last years files out of County Directory]

F. Check Printing Information
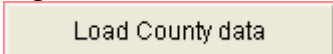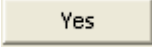
1. At the top of the main screen, click on Setup/Year End.
2. Click [Common Bill Printing Data]
3. Check that all the information listed is correct. Pay special attention to the Bill Title and all of the dates to the right, including tax year.
4. When you are finished, click [Exit Screen].
5. Also click on [Penalties] to change penalty dates and make sure that penalty amounts are correct.
6. When you are finished, click [Exit Screen].

G. Move and Rename the RPS files

Call us at (607) 722-4933 if you need help with this step.

H. Load Data

1. The RPS files need to be renamed and in the county folder.

2. At the top of the main screen, click on Setup/Year End.
3. Click [Load County data]
4. If you have an Anti-virus real time scan, it must be off.
5. Check the dates, and make sure the T/S/V/C is correct.
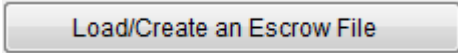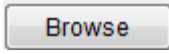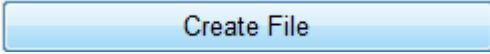6. Click on [Load Data]
7. Click on [Yes]
8. There will be information written across the screen. This is normal.
9. When the data is finished loading, print a warrant report. Check this against the warrant the board approved. Schools: remember our warrant already has the STAR amount removed.
10. Remember to turn the Anti-virus real time scan back on.
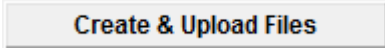
I. Make Escrow File

1. From the main screen, click on [Payments]
2. On the right hand side, click on the Escrow/Lockbox tab.
3. Click [Load/Create an Escrow File]
4. Then click on [Create an Escrow File]
5. At the bottom, enter a location for the escrow file by clicking [Browse]
6. Click [Create File]
7. After you are done creating the escrow file, you will have to transfer it to a disk or attach it to an email.

J. Prior Years Data on the Internet
If you would like to keep the data for prior years on the Internet, you must call us before loading the current year of data to the Internet.
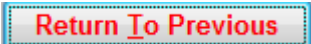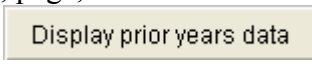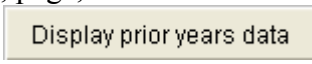
K. Load Current Data to the Internet

1. On the main screen, click [Do These Steps Daily]
2. Click [Create & Upload Files].
3. Username and password are master and master to login.
4. Place checkmarks next to both load payment history file and load taxpayer file and then click [-- load into Web database -->>].

III.   Daily, Weekly and Monthly Use

A. Looking up Parcels
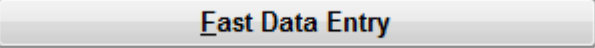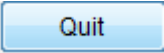
1. On the main screen, click on [Parcel Lookup]

2. Remember to type in what you'd like to search on and then click on the appropriate button.
3. One feature is the "Starts with" checkbox. If you have a check in the box, it will give you a list to pick from rather than providing the exact match.
    a. If you are searching by bill number, tax map id or account number, it will give you a list clustered around the number you typed in.
    b. If you are searching by owner name, it will give you a list of owners whose names start with what you typed in.
    c. If you are searching by number + street, we recommend only typing in 12 main instead of 12 main street. You will also get a list to pick from.
4. The parcel lookup has buttons for the following:
    a. History Report: a multi-year report of billing and payment information.
    b. Bill: reprint a bill
    c. Receipt: print a receipt
    d. Split This Parcel: begin the process to do a divided assessment
    e. Change parcel: change the assessment, exemptions.
    f. Return letter: to return an incorrect payment to the taxpayer with.
5. Another feature is that you may change the name and address associated with the parcel directly on the lookup screen.
    a. Under the name and address area, put a checkmark in Edit Address.
    b. Click in the name and address area and make the necessary changes.
    c. The checkmark must remain for the change to stick! ☑ Edit Address
    d. Click **Return To Previous** to make your changes permanent.
6. On the Misc/Prior Years tab you'll find the comments, book, page, etc.
7. You may also click on a prior year in the grid and then click Display prior years data .
    Then you can reprint a bill or receipt from a previous year. To get back to the current year, simply click on the Bill Info tab.

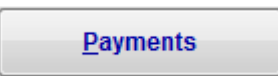### B. Entering Payments

1. On the main screen, click Payments
2. There are two types of payment entry:
    a. Standard Data Entry
        i.   Click **Make Payments**
        ii. Change the posting date if necessary (for postmarks, etc)
        iii. Select the correct place of payment
        iv. Search for and select the parcel
        v.   Make sure the amount paid is entered in the appropriate box (cash or check) and the paid by info is correct.
        vi. Click **Collect** or **Collect & Immediately Print a Receipt**

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      b. Fast Data Entry: for exact, full payments by owner only

          i. Click **Fast Data Entry**

          ii. Change the posting date if necessary (for postmarks, etc)

          iii. Select the correct place of payment

          iv. Type in the bill number and hit enter, or scan the barcode.

          v. To exit, click **Quit**

C. Entering Over/under payments

If it is over/under by a little bit, make the adjustment in the misc box on the payment screen. If the overage is an amount you intend to refund, add the overage into the tax box on the payment screen.

If a payment is over by just a little bit ($0.80 for example), put that extra in misc charges. In my example, we are in a 2nd notice period, so you must add it to the $2 2nd notice fee, making the amount in that box $2.80. The amount to collect and the check match the actual (pretend) check amount of $1594.00. This will not trigger an overpayment to be refunded, but it will show on the Miscellaneous Balances Report.
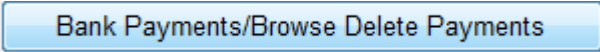
If a payment is over, and you want/need to refund the extra, increase the amount in the tax box. In this example, I pretend that the check included $200 extra, I increased the tax from $1800 to $2000 and hit tab. Then the amount to collect and check match the actual check amount of 2038.00. This will trigger an overpayment of $200 to be refunded. See page 9 for that process.

D. Adding Bank or Escrow Payments
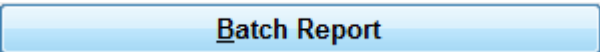
Note: If you have a large number of bank or escrow payments, you want to begin this process with an empty batch.

1. On the main screen, click **Payments**

2. Click **Bank Payments/Browse Delete Payments**

3. Change the batch date if necessary (for postmarks, etc)

4. Select the correct place of payment

5. Enter the paid by information (bank name, check number) under the grid on the right.

6. To enter many payments from one bank, enter the bank code in the box at the lower left hand corner and hit enter. All parcels with that bank code will be placed in the grid. Add/delete as necessary.

7. To add just a few parcels, select either bill # or tax map. ⦿ Add by Bill # ○ Add by Tax Map Type the parcel's information in the box to the right then hit enter.

8. When you are finished, click **Return To Previous** and check the batch report.
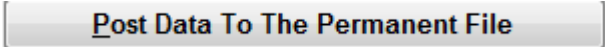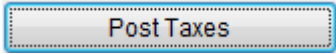
E. Batch Report

1. On the main screen, click **Payments**

2. Click **Batch Report**

3. Change the order the report will display in, or payments displayed if desired.

4. Click **Print Batch Report** and print the report.

5. Make sure that you verify that every payment is for the correct amount.

7
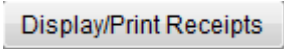
6. Also verify that the monies you have collected match the dollar amount collected on the report.
7. Checking each entry for accuracy now will save you time and aggravation later.

F. Posting Payments
Note: You should double-check that all the entries in your batch are correct by examining the batch report and/or shopping cart before you make your entries permanent. Mistakes are much easier to fix before they have become permanent.
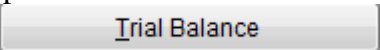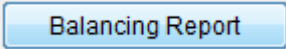
1. On the main screen, click **Payments**
2. Click **Post Data To The Permanent File**
3. Check the deposit date to make sure it is correct.
4. Check at least the total amount and number of payments below the shopping cart. If you find an error, you can check on a payment by clicking on the bill number. You can even delete a payment from the screen that pops up.
5. Click **Post Taxes**
6. Print the reports that follow for your records.

G. Printing Receipts by Batch
1. When you collect a batch of mail or escrow payments, it is quicker and easier to print receipts for the entire batch at once.
2. The batch must be posted.
3. At the top of the main screen, click on Reports.
4. Click on **Receipts by Batch**
5. To print receipts for just one batch, enter that batch number into both the Starting Batch # and the Ending Batch # and then click **Display/Print Receipts**
6. You may also print a receipt for an individual parcel from the parcel lookup screen.
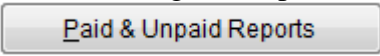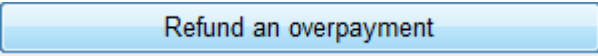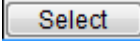
H. Balancing and Other Reports
We have a wide variety of reports, only a few are mentioned below. To access the reports from the main screen, at the top click on Reports.
1. Balancing Report
   a. Click **Trial Balance**
   b. Click **Balancing Report**
   c. This will give you totals and break payments down into certain categories. If there are overpayments, they must be refunded before the program can balance.
2. Paid & Unpaid Reports
   a. Allows you to run a variety of reports that will show who has paid in full, not paid or paid a partial payment. The overpayment report is also located here.
3. Warrant Report
   a. This is what you should check after loading your data.
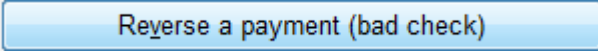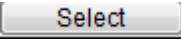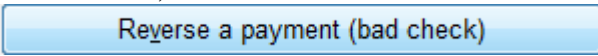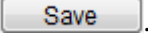
I. Refunds, Reversals & Bad Checks
1. Refunds

8

    a. From the main screen, go to Reports.

    b. Click on [Paid & Unpaid Reports] and run the overpayment report. This will show you the parcels that may need to be refunded.

    c. Exit to the main screen.

    d. From the main screen, click on [Payments].

    e. Click on [Refund an overpayment]

    f.   Change the posting date and place of payment (you can use the refund option) if necessary and find and select the parcel you need to refund.

    g. Click [Select] on a payment line. Even if you are refunding the amount of a warrant adjustment, you must select a payment line, that is where the money is coming from.

    h. Make sure that the amount to refund is correct, and enter a reason for refund. If the amount is not correct, you may change any of the numbers.

    i. Click [Accept this Refund]

    j. Finish processing this batch like you would any other batch.

2. Reversals/Bad Checks

    a. From the main screen, click on [Payments].

    b. Click on [Reverse a payment (bad check)]

    c. Find and select the parcel.

    d. Enter the bad check fee (if any) and a reason for the reversal. Make sure to check the Bad Check/NSF checkbox if this is a bad check and should show on the bad check report.

    e. Select the payment that needs to be reversed by clicking on [Select] in the grid.

    f. Click REVERSE BUTTON.

    g. Click Yes-Reverse it!

    h. This is a batch process and will require posting (new in September 2013).

3. Adding or Removing a Bad Check fee
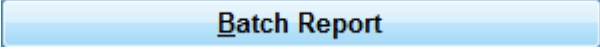
    a. If you find after a payment has been reversed that the bad check fee is incorrect, you can easily correct it.

    b. From the main screen, click on [Payments].

    c. Click on [Reverse a payment (bad check)]

    d. Find and select the parcel.

    e. In the lower left corner, click on [Edit Bad Check Fee]

    f. Enter the correct Bad Check Fee in the box that appears (0.00 if you'd like to remove the fee), and then click [Save].

    g. The fee will change in the grid above, click [Return to Previous] to exit the screen.

4. Reversing an Entire Batch: Clerical or other Errors
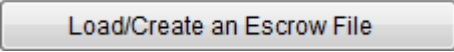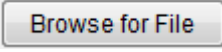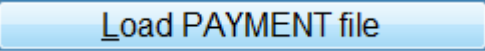
a. From the main screen, click on **Payments** .
b. Click on **Reverse / Delete a Batch** .
c. Enter the batch number to delete.
d. Enter the reason for deletion; it must be at least 14 characters.
e. When you click on Delete the batch, it will all but disappear. The only record of the batch will be in a trace file (for your own records and auditors).
f. Please be aware the only way to reverse this process is to re-enter the batch, so be really sure you are doing the right thing before you reverse a batch.

J. Credit Card Payments

1. Before you download credit card payments from the Internet, make sure that you have no payments in your batch.

2. From the main screen, click on **Payments**

3. Click on **Download Credit Card Payments**

4. Click **Batch Report**

5. Change the order the report will display in, or payments displayed if desired.

6. Click **Print Batch Report** and print the report.

7. Make sure that you verify that every payment is for the correct amount.
8. Checking each entry for accuracy now will save you time and aggravation later.
9. Once you are sure everything is correct, you may post the batch.

K. Loading an escrow file

1. Before you load an escrow file, make sure that you have no payments in your batch.

2. From the main screen, click on **Payments**

3. On the right hand side, click on the Escrow/Lockbox tab.

4. Click on **Load/Create an Escrow File**

5. Click on **Load an Escrow File**

6. Enter the location of the file by clicking on **Browse for File**

7. Make sure that the entries in the Full or Partial and Escrow Pmt # are correct. If the disk has only full payments on it, the Escrow Pmt # doesn't matter.
8. Change the date if necessary.

9. Click on **Load PAYMENT file**

10. After the escrow disk loads, check your batch report and the report and the check the escrow company sent.
11. When everything matches and is correct, post the batch.

L.   Daily Steps

1. Every day, or at least a couple of times a week, you should backup your data and upload your data to the Internet.

2. On the main screen of the program click on **Do These Steps Daily**
3. Perform either an Internet Backup and/or a File Backup.
4. If you have Internet lookup, go down to step 2.
5. If you haven't done any address changes, splits or small claims adjustments, you don't need a check in front of Taxpayer File.
6. Click **Create & Upload Files** .
7. Username and password are still master and master to login.
8. Place a checkmark next to load payment history file (and taxpayer file if you needed it) and then click **-- load into Web database -->>** .

M.   Lockbox Operations
At the lockbox:
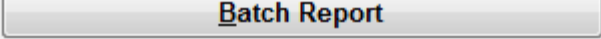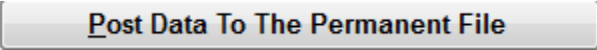
1. From the main screen, click on **Payments**
2. On the right hand side, click on the Escrow/Lockbox tab.
3. Under the Lockbox section, click **Send Batches**
4. In the grid on the left, check all of the batches you want to send. There will be a total displayed to the right, you may want to send that number to the school/municipality.
5. On the right side of the screen, browse to a location to save the file.
6. Click **Export Batches Now** . The file would be named batches10001003.txt if you exported batches 1000-1003.
7. Send the file to the school/municipality, usually by attaching to an email.
8. If you ever need to re-send a batch, go to Batches Admin, select the batch(es) in the grid, and click Reset Batch Flag. Then they will be available to you on the Send Batches screen.

At the school/municipality:

1. You must save the file somewhere on your computer to import it.
2. From the main screen, click on **Payments**
3. On the right hand side, click on the Escrow/Lockbox tab.
4. Under the Lockbox section, click **Import batches**
5. Browse to the folder where the file is saved by clicking **Browse For Folder** .
6. Now you must select the file by clicking **Browse For File** .
7. Click **Import File Now** .
8. When you get a message box that the process is finished, click ok, then Return to Previous.
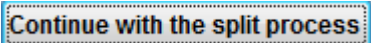
9. Click [Batch Report]. This will print each individual batch that has been imported, and there is also a summary of all the batches at the end. Check the numbers carefully.
10. When you are sure the numbers are correct, [Post Data To The Permanent File].
11. Run the Daily Batch Summary Report, and any other reports you'd like to check. You can also reprint the batches individually from the reprint a batch screen.

IV. Less Commonly Used Features

A. Splits/Apportionments

1. Before splitting a parcel, do a backup of your data from [Do These Steps Daily]
2. You must have all of the information about the new parcels available before starting the process. It is up to the assessor or the county to provide you with all of the information that is required for the split.
    a. New owners, addresses and tax map numbers.
    b. Assessments for the new parcels.
    c. Land assessments and acerage are helpful but not necessary.
    d. Exemption and/or STAR savings amounts for the new parcels if the original parcel had an exemption.
    e. New tax amounts by levy line.
3. If the parcel is paid, please call us before splitting the parcel: there are additional steps that need to be taken.
4. To split a parcel, look up the parcel and print a bill for the original parcel.
5. You'll need to have complete information for each of the new parcels to continue: a new tax map #, owner name and address, assessment and exemption amounts, and the tax amount for each levy line.
6. Then click on [Split This Parcel].
7. Step 1:
    a. If all of the new parcels have different Tax Map #'s from the original parcel, choose the first option, "DIVIDED INTEREST- ALL different map #'s".
    b. If one of the new parcels retains the original tax map ID, choose the second option, "DIVIDED INTEREST- ORIGINAL PARCEL + NEW PARCELS.
8. Enter in the white box the number of parcels that you want.
    a. Click on [CREATE THE NEW PARCELS]
    b. Make sure that the correct Tax Map IDs are in the table.
    c. If they are not correct, double click on one that is incorrect and replace it with the correct number.
    d. When the Tax Map IDs are correct, click [Continue with the split process]
    e. Click on the owner name of the first parcel in the table, and then click on [CHANGE BILL INFORMATION]

    f.   Make sure that all the information on the screen is correct.

    g.   Especially check to see that the owner's name and address and the Landassess and Assessment are correct.

    h.   When everything is correct, click on   **Save and Continue**

    i.   If the property has any exemptions, make sure they are correct in the table.

    j.   If exemptions appear and they shouldn't, simply double-click in the amount box on the exemption line in the table enter 0.

    k.   When everything is correct, click on   **Save and Continue**

    l.   Make sure that the tax amounts are all correct.

         i.   Schools: in the grid, the taxable value and tax needs to be the pre-STAR value. We subtract the STAR savings down near the bottom of the screen.

         ii.   To change a tax amount, double-click in the Tax box (it will turn blue), and then type in the correct tax amount. Do not use commas when typing in any number.

    m.   When all of the tax amounts are correct, click on   **Save and Continue**

    n.   Now click on the next parcel in the table, and then click on   **CHANGE BILL INFORMATION**

    o.   Change all the information for this parcel like you did for the first parcel (steps f-m).

    p.   Continue until you have changed all the information for all of the new parcels.

    q.   When all of the information for all of the parcels is changed (they will all be yellow in the table), you may proceed.

    r.   Click on   **Validate Changes**

    s.   If the bills are off a penny or so, select one parcel, click on   **CHANGE BILL INFORMATION** and change the tax amounts so that they are correct.

    t.   When you get the message that the new bills balance with the original, proceed.

    u.   Click on   **Print Change Report**

    v.   Print the report and make sure that all of your information is correct, especially name, address and taxes.

    w.   Click on   **Make Split Changes Permanent**

    x.   The new parcels will be posted to the permanent file, and given the next available bill numbers. The split process is now complete.

    y.   Look up the new parcels and print new bills for the taxpayers.

9.   If you need help with any of the steps, call us to let us help you through it. Also remember that there is a button to abandon the split process if you need to start over.

B. Changing Parcel Data or Assessment (Warrant Adjustments)

1.   On the main screen, click   **Parcel Lookup**

2.   Choose the parcel you need to change, and reprint a copy of the bill for your records.

3.   Make sure you have all the information required to complete the change.

4. If all you need to do is change the owner name/address, check [Edit Address] and then edit whatever you need to in the box above. Just make sure edit address is still checked and click [Return To Previous] and it will make the change for you.

5. If you need to change something besides owner name/address, click [Change parcel]

6. Click [Change Tax Map #, assessment, STAR, etc.] and change any information that needs to be changed, then [Save and Continue]

7. Click [Add/Change/Delete Exemptions]
    a. To change an exemption, change the amount in the table.
    b. To add or delete an exemption, click on the appropriate button.
    c. When you are finished, click [Save and Continue].

8. Click [Add/Change/Delete Tax lines]

9. If you have changed the assessment or exemptions, make sure the assessed and taxable values are correct for each tax line. Schools: remember that the taxable value should be the pre-star amount.

10. Check and double check all of the tax amounts, then click [Save and Exit].

11. If you have installments, be sure to click on the button to check/change the installment amounts.

12. Click [Save & Print Changes --->] This is the only opportunity you have to print this sheet.

13. Reprint a new bill.

V.   End of year procedures

A. Balancing

Ideally, you've been balancing the monies collected according to Wintax with your bank account regularly. Please run a balancing report one more time to make sure that there are no outstanding overpayments, and that the monies collected match your bank account.

B. Making files
1. At the top of the main screen, click on Setup/Year End.
2. Click on the purple Year End tab.
3. Find the button for your county and click on it.
4. There are probably simple instructions for making the year-end file your county has requested.
5. When the file is complete, there should be a message box stating where the file was saved. This is where you can find it to attach it to an email or burn it to a cd.

VI.   Frequently Asked Questions

A.   When I print a bill or receipt, I see incorrect information (dates).

To fix the information, click on Setup/Year End from the main screen. There are two places to check dates and information: Common Bill Printing Data and Penalties.

B.   I tried to update my program version, but it didn't work.

Make sure that Wintax is not open. Go to http://www.townsoft.com/updates/updates.html and click on the link to download Wintax. If asked, select run. Click install when the box pops up (click run again if necessary). When that goes away, go back into Wintax.
If that didn't work, click on Setup/Year End and click on Setup for this workstation. Write down the program folder. Go back to the updates page (link above) and try again.

C.   My penalties are wrong (or I should have penalties and I don't).

Click on Setup/Year End from the main screen. Click on Penalties and fix the dates or percentages as necessary.

VII.   Some Tips and Tricks

- Splitting a paid parcel: The lien on the parcel has already been satisfied. There is no further legal action required on the part of the tax collector.
- Informing taxpayers/banks that haven't paid: There is no legal obligation to do so.
- Receipts: You are only required to send receipts in two cases.
    - A receipt has been requested.
    - If a tax bill is paid by a bank or escrow company, you must send a receipt to the homeowner.
- Modified tax bills: You may have to give the taxpayer additional time to pay without penalty after the change to the tax bill has been approved. Check with your treasurer, school business administrator and/or school board.
- Tolerance: By law, a collector cannot receive anything other than the exact amount due. However, it is accepted practice to collect over or under by a certain amount ($0.25, $1.00, $5.00 etc). There is no penalty in the law for collecting within a tolerance.
- If a parcel was paid with multiple checks and one of them bounces: The entire payment must be reversed. The money for any check that didn't bounce should be refunded to the payer. If you get a new payment in a penalty period, the penalty should be charged on the entire amount due.
- Making address changes: These are handy for receipt printing purposes. Any changes you make are for your system only; they don't get transferred back to the county. The assessor or county must also make the changes in their files.

Printing receipts and bills: Make sure you triple check before you send anything out. Make sure that the penalty dates, fiscal year and places to send or make payments are all correct. Human error does occur! Especially with bill printing, make sure you (and a couple of other people) check the first few that come off of the actual printer before you let all of the bills print.