

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)**

**What is Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)?**

For the occupancy in any hotel, each transient is subject to and shall pay a nine percent (9%) Transient Occupancy Tax of the rent charged by the operator. It is also commonly known as ‘bed tax’ and is authorized under Santa Rosa City Code Section 3-28 originally enacted March 1965. The current tax rate has been in effect since January 1994. Each operator shall collect the tax and any applicable assessment to the same extent and at the same time as the rent is collected from every transient.

**What are applicable assessments?**

The City of Santa Rosa has 2 Business Improvement Area (BIA) Assessments.

- 1) 3% Santa Rosa Tourism BIA (SRTBIA) since August 2010 that applies to ALL operators.
- 2) 2% Sonoma County Tourism BIA (SCTBIA) since January 2005 that applies ONLY to operators generating over \$350,000 in total rent during the preceding fiscal year (July 1-June 30).

**What is a “hotel”?**

“Hotel” means any structure, or any portion of any structure which is occupied or intended or designed for occupancy by transients for dwelling, lodging or sleeping purposes, and includes any hotel, inn, tourist home or house, motel, studio motel, bachelor hotel, lodging house, roominghouse, apartment house, dormitory, public or private club, mobilehome or house trailer at a fixed location, or other similar structure or portion thereof. Vacation rentals are considered a “hotel”.

**What is a “transient”?**

“Transient” means any person who exercises occupancy or is entitled to occupancy for a period of 30 consecutive calendar days or less.

**What is an “operator”?**

“Operator” means the person or company who is proprietor of the hotel, whether in the capacity of owner, lessee, sublessee, mortgagee in possession, licensee, or any other capacity.

**What is included in “rent”?**

“Rent” means the amount charged, whether or not received, for the occupancy of space in a hotel valued in money, whether to be received in money, goods, labor or otherwise, including all receipts, cash, credits and property and services of any kind or nature, without any deduction therefrom whatsoever. Rent includes any “mandatory” or “Non-optional” fee or charge such as but not limited to: resort fees, cleaning fees, surcharges, pet fees, no show fees, attrition/cancellation fees, late/early check out/in fees, extra person charge, or roll-away bed charge.

**Do I need to register as an “operator” with the City?**

Within 30 days after commencing business, each operator of any hotel renting occupancy to transients is required to register with the Finance Department – Revenue Division at City Hall Annex, 90 Santa Rosa Ave. Every registered operator will be mailed appropriate remittance forms at least a week before the end of each quarter.

**As an operator, when and how often do I remit my tax collections to the City?**

Quarterly. Each operator shall, on or before the last day of the month following the close of each calendar quarter, make a return to the City, on forms provided by the City, of the total rents charged and received and the amount of tax collected for transient occupancies. At the time the return is filed, the full amount of the tax collected shall be remitted to the City.

Quarter Ending	Collection Period	Due to City by
March 31	January 1 to March 31	April 30
June 30	April 1 to June 30	July 31
September 30	July 1 to September 30	October 31
December 31	October 1 to December 31	January 31

**The last day of the reporting period falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday. When is the last day I can pay my Transient Occupancy Tax without penalty?**

Your return must be postmarked or delivered to our office on or before 5:00 p.m. the next business day. There is a drop box at the back of City Hall Annex, 90 Santa Rosa Ave.

**Where do I mail my quarterly return?**

City of Santa Rosa, Attn: Revenue & Collections, P.O. Box 1673, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

**Is anybody exempt from paying the tax and applicable assessments?**

Yes, please go to [www.srcity.org/tot](http://www.srcity.org/tot) for a list and explanation of exemptions.

**How long should I maintain my records?**

You need to keep and preserve records for four (4) years.

**Where can I get help calculating my tax or if I have a question?**

Please go to [www.srcity.org/tot](http://www.srcity.org/tot) where you can find our online remittance form and other relevant information. If you have any questions, you can call (707) 543-3170 or fax to (707) 543-3136 or email [revenue@srcity.org](mailto:revenue@srcity.org) or visit us at 90 Santa Rosa Ave during business hours.

**We did not have any guests during the most recent reporting period; we are closed for the season, or all guests stayed over 30 consecutive days. Do we still have to complete a return?**

Yes. A return is required regardless of whether any qualified rents are received for the reporting period.

**We plan to sell or close the business. What do we need to do?**

Returns and payments are due immediately upon cessation of business for any reason. In either event, contact our office in person or by telephone so that we can assist you.

**There has been a change in ownership or a change to other information contained on my registration form, what should I do?**

Contact our office and request a new Registration form or download the Registration form at [www.srcity.org/tot](http://www.srcity.org/tot). Complete the form with the new information and return it to our office.

**Do I need a permit to operate a vacation rental?**

No. The City does not currently regulate vacation rentals as a land use separate and distinct from a residential land use. However, a restriction has been put into place by [Ordinance 2017-024](#), which took effect January 13, 2018, that prohibits rentals of less than 30-days for Accessory Dwelling Units or Junior Accessory Dwelling Units.

**If I'm an operator of a vacation rental, what do I collect from my guest staying 30 days or less?**

You need to collect and remit the 9% TOT and 3% SRTBIA. You do not have to collect and remit the 2% SCTBIA unless your gross rent is over \$350,000 the previous fiscal year.

**Do I need to pay the City's Business Tax?**

Operators including vacation rental owners (hosts) renting more than three dwelling units are subject to the City's Business Tax Ordinance (SRCC 6-04). Those renting fewer than three units are not. Please go to [www.srcity.org/bt](http://www.srcity.org/bt) for more info.