

## Business Rates Empty Property Occupation Discount

The Business Rates Empty Property Occupation Discount scheme provides a six month discount to ratepayers who occupy long term empty non-domestic properties. The scheme will run from 1 October 2013 to 31 March 2015.

The criteria are as follows:

- Property has been empty for at least six months
- Property has now been occupied
- No previous Empty Property Occupation Discount award has been applied in the last twelve months leading up to the date of occupation.
- Where a ratepayer already has eight or more properties in the Brighton and Hove area, Empty Property Occupation Discount will not be applied.
- Where a property is being used for storage purposes only, it will not be considered as “occupied” for the purposes of this Discount, unless the purpose of the business and property itself is storage.

For the discount to be applied, the property must now be occupied. If the property is occupied for a short time and then vacated, eg it is occupied for less than six months, a further discount will not be applicable because of the twelve month rule described above.

If on 31 March 2015 a ratepayer is in receipt of an Empty Property Occupation Discount, it will continue for a maximum of six months, depending on how many days are remaining on the Discount.

Ratepayers who become liable for a property after 31 March 2015 will not be eligible for the discount.

If a ratepayer has assumed liability on or before 31 March 2015, but has not yet occupied the property, they will still receive Empty Property Occupation Discount as long as they have occupied the property no later than 1 July 2015.

There will be no application process as the discount will be applied automatically by the Business Rates team if the criteria are met.

The amount of the discount will vary according to the Rateable Value (RV) of a property, so that smaller and medium-sized businesses would benefit proportionately more than larger ones. Rateable Value is a base amount used to calculate a Business Rates liability. The following table shows the potential discounts:

<b>RATEABLE VALUE</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Illustrative amount of discount for the three month period (apprx)</b>
0-24999	100	£20 to £5900
25000-34999	50	£2900 to £4100

Most ratepayers with RVs under £6,000 already receive 100% discount in this financial year, due to the national scheme for Small Business Rate Relief, so they would not need an Empty Property Occupation Discount. Properties with RVs between £6,000 and £12,000 receive a lesser amount of Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR), between 1% and 100%, depending on how high the RV is. Cases with less than 100% SBRR will receive a top up so that their overall discount is 100%.