

Are you eligible for tax relief?

A variety of exemptions and special valuations could lower your property taxes.



The property tax provides more tax dollars for local services in Texas than any other source. Property taxes help to pay for public schools, city streets, county roads, police, fire protection, and many other services. Property taxes are local taxes.

Your local appraisal district appraises and values your property.

The governing bodies of each county, school, city, and special district sets your tax rates and collect your taxes.



Tax relief is available to you through: homestead exemptions; disabled veteran exemptions; productivity appraisal for farm, ranch and timber land; and tax deferrals for homeowners aged 65 and older.

A Homestead Exemption lowers the property taxes on your home by lowering its taxable value. If your home is valued at \$50,000 and you receive a \$15,000 homestead exemption, your home will be taxed as if it were worth \$35,000.

And when you receive a homestead exemption, the *taxable value* of your home cannot increase by more than ten percent each year.



Who qualifies for a homestead exemption?

Anyone who owned a home on January 1st (and used it as their primary residence on that date) is entitled to a \$15,000 homestead exemption to lower their school taxes this year...and it doesn't matter if your home is a house, condominium, or mobile home.

Freestone County offers a general residential homestead to all homeowners.

Are other exemptions available?

If you're *disabled*--or if you're *65 years old or older*--you are entitled to an additional \$10,000 school tax exemption on your home. And if you qualify for the over-65 exemption, you're also entitled to a permanent, locked-in "ceiling" on the school property taxes on your home. (The ceiling does not apply to county or city property taxes, and those entities may offer other exemptions.) The over-65 homeowner's exemptions and school tax ceiling transfers to the surviving spouse, if the spouse is 55 years of age or older at the time of death and lives in and owns the home. Over-65 homeowners also may transfer the percentage of school tax paid, based on their former home's over-65 school tax ceiling, to a new home.

Do I have to apply each year?

No. If you had a homestead exemption on your home in 2006, you won't need to reapply for 2007 unless the chief appraiser requires it. However, if you haven't received an exemption on your present home--or if you've moved to a new home--you'll need to file for an exemption for 2007. If you turn 65 this year and if you have already provided birth date information on your homestead application, your over-65 exemption will be automatically applied to your home. And if you became disabled during 2006, you need to file for the disabled person's exemption.



Are you a disabled veteran or survivor?



You may qualify for an exemption if you are either a veteran who was disabled while serving with the U. S. armed forces or the surviving spouse or child (under 18 years of age and unmarried) of a disabled veteran or a member of the armed forces who was killed while on active duty.

You must be a Texas resident and you must also have documents from either Veterans Administration or the appropriate branch of the armed forces showing the percentage of your service-related disability. Your disability rating must be at least 10 percent.

"Productivity appraisal" may lower the property taxes on your farm, ranch or timber land!

Farmers, ranchers, and timber growers are allowed to pay property taxes based upon the "production value" of their land rather than on its market value. This "productivity appraisal" means qualified land is taxed based on its ability to produce crops, livestock, or timber--not on its value on the real estate market. And it can mean substantial property tax savings.



When is the application deadline?

If your land has never had a productivity appraisal or you are a new owner, you must apply to your local appraisal district by April 30 to take advantage of this benefit on your 2007 property taxes. You may get up to 60 extra days if you have a good reason and ask for it by April 30. If you miss the deadline, you may still be able to apply, but you will pay a penalty. Check with your appraisal district office.



Do you need to reapply annually?

If your land already receives agricultural or timber productivity appraisal, you normally don't need to reapply unless the chief appraiser requires you to do so. If a new application is required, the appraisal district will notify you by mail. If you received a letter by certified mail notifying you of the removal of the special valuation, you must reapply to continue receiving the special valuation in 2007.

Protect Your Rights!

"Render" your taxable property by April 15th.

A "rendition" is a report to the appraisal district that lists all the taxable property you owned or controlled on January 1st of this year. The rendition form is available at your local appraisal district office...or you may draft a similar form.

You must file a rendition if you own tangible personal property that is used to produce income--such as the inventory and equipment used by a business. If you fail to file a rendition, you will have to pay a 10 percent penalty. If you file a fraudulent rendition, the district court can assess you a 50 percent penalty.

The advantages of filing a rendition are:

You give your opinion of your property's value. If the appraisal district believes the value is higher, it must notify you in writing of the higher value and explain how you can protest that value to the appraisal review board.

You record your correct mailing address so your tax bills will go to the right address.

You can also file a "report of decreased value" to notify the appraisal district of significant depreciation of the value of your property.

**Pick up your FREE copy of our pamphlet
TEXAS PROPERTY TAXES
Taxpayer Rights, Remedies, & Responsibilities**

You'll learn in this pamphlet how your property is appraised, so you can decide if the appraisal district's value is reasonable. And if you decide it isn't, Remedies will tell you how to prepare an appeal to the appraisal review board. You'll learn the kinds of protests the appraisal review board can hear--and what kind of evidence you need to bring to your hearing. Key dates are listed, so you'll know what you must do and when you're required to act.

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