

New Homestead Exemption Application Rules Become Effective on September 1, 2011

The recent session of the Texas Legislature imposed rigorous new standards of mandatory disclosure for property owners who apply for any one of several kinds of homestead exemptions starting **September 1, 2011**.

In order to receive a homestead exemption for property tax purposes, applicants must now provide a copy of their Texas driver's license or Texas state-issued identification card and a copy of their vehicle registration receipt with their application for a homestead exemption to the appraisal district.

The addresses shown on each of the documents must be the same as the address for which the homestead exemption is sought, according to new regulations. Those who do not own a vehicle will be required to submit a notarized affidavit certifying that fact and provide a copy of a current bill received from a utility company. The address on the utility bill must be the same as the address on the application for a homestead exemption.

The Legislature has also authorized appraisal districts to gain access to the database of the Texas Department of Public Safety so that differences in addresses reported for driver's license and property tax reasons can be audited electronically. This change will prevent some citizens from obtaining homestead exemptions on more than one property.

The new requirement that takes effect on September 1, 2011, is required for any one of the several ways property owners can qualify for a residential property homestead. These include the following:

- General residential exemption
- Over-65 exemption
- Disability exemption
- 100% disabled veterans exemption
- Extension of exemption for a surviving spouse
- Exemption for manufactured (mobile) home

Each of the programs may have additional requirements for qualification.

The common standard is that all applicants must provide the additional documentation regarding driver's license or a Texas issued identification card, and a copy of their motor vehicle registration. Or, the property owner must provide a 'Non-Ownership Of Motor Vehicle Affidavit' and a utility bill.

For those who are seeking homestead exemption status on a manufactured home, the applicant must also provide documentation as noted below:

- Statement of ownership and location issued by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- A copy of the purchase contract or payment receipt that the applicant is the purchaser of the manufactured home, OR, a sworn affidavit that:
 - a. The applicant is the owner of the manufactured home
 - b. The seller of the manufactured home did not provide the applicant with a purchase contract, and
 - c. The applicant could not locate the seller after making a good faith effort

The modified homestead exemption form and the referenced affidavits are posted on the effective date of the new legislation (September 1, 2011) on the website of the McLennan County Appraisal District at:

www.mclennanpad.org.

Applications dated and submitted to the McLennan County Appraisal District by August 31, 2011 will be processed under the pre-September 1 guidelines.