

NEWS RELEASE from the Smith County Appraisal District 245 SSE Loop 323, Tyler, TX 75702. 903/510-8600 Michael Barnett, Chief Appraiser.

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For **IMMEDIATE** Release

HOMESTEAD EXEMPTIONS MAY REDUCE PROPERTY TAX BILLS

A variety of homestead exemptions are available to homeowners in Texas to reduce their property tax bills. Application forms are available at the Smith County Appraisal District office and also at www.smithcad.org. There is no charge for filing the application.

Homeowners in Smith County can reduce their property taxes by taking advantage of various partial exemptions available on Texas homes. A homestead exemption lowers the property taxes on a home by lowering its taxable value. "It doesn't matter if your home is a house, condominium or manufactured home," noted Chief Appraiser Mike Barnett.

Taxpayers who received a homestead exemption on their present home in 2010 do not need to reapply for 2011. Homeowners who have never received a homestead exemption on the home they owned and in which they were living on January 1, 2011, can apply to receive an exemption for 2011.

Texas law provides that homeowners who are 65 years of age or older or disabled may apply to receive the over-65 exemption as soon as they turn 65 or become disabled, own the home, and live in the home as their principal residence. While not eliminating taxes entirely, these exemptions provide special benefits for older or disabled homeowners.

All school districts offer a \$15,000 general homestead exemption, and homeowners who are disabled or 65 or older receive an additional \$10,000

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exemption. A disabled veteran who receives from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs 100 percent disability compensation due to a service-connected disability and a rating of 100 percent disabled or of individual unemployability is entitled to an exemption from taxation of the total appraised value of the veteran's residence homestead. This benefit does not accrue to the surviving spouse upon the veteran's death.

The school exemption for homeowners who are over 65 or disabled establishes a special tax “ceiling” for school taxes. “Over-65 or disabled homeowners may transfer their tax ceiling to a new home,” Barnett explained. The new tax ceiling is calculated so that the homeowner pays the same percentage of tax on the new home as was paid on the former home.

Any taxing unit’s governing body may grant an additional optional exemption on the homesteads of disabled or over-65 homeowners or both. State law also allows counties, cities and junior colleges the option of establishing a ceiling similar to the school tax ceiling for homeowners who are over-65 or disabled.

Taxing units may also offer a local option exemption of up to 20% of the value of a qualifying homestead. Various optional homestead exemptions are offered by taxing units in Smith County.

For more information or to obtain an application form for any homestead exemption, contact Smith County Appraisal District, 245 SSE Loop 323, Tyler, Texas 75702. 903/510-8600. Homestead applications are also available at www.smithcad.org.

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