

Washington County Appraisal District

Frequently Asked Questions

Ownership / Exemptions

1. How can I change my mailing address? Can you change my mailing address by phone?

To protect the interest of property owners, it is WCAD's policy to require a written request to change a mailing address. Mailing address changes will not be accepted over the telephone. You may send your written request by email at wcad@brenhamk-12.net, by fax at **979-277-3741** or mail to **Washington County Appraisal District, PO Box 681, Brenham, TX 77834-0681**. Please indicate the correct mailing address and daytime phone number where you can be reached on your request or complete the Address Change Form available on the Forms page of our website at www.washingtoncad.org.

2. What can I do if the WCAD ownership record does not reflect the current ownership of a property?

After 90 days from the date of closing on a property, if the appraisal record does not reflect the current ownership, please contact the Deeds Department at **979-277-3740**.

3. What exemptions are available to homeowners?

General Residence Homestead • Age 65 or Older Exemption • Age 55 or Older Surviving Spouse of individual who qualified for Age 65 or Older Exemption • Disabled Person Exemption • 100% Disabled Veteran or Surviving Spouse of Disabled Veteran who received the 100% Disabled Veteran's Exemption • Donated Residence Homestead of Partially Disabled Veteran or Surviving Spouse of Disabled Veteran who qualified for Donated Residence Homestead • Surviving Spouse of Member of Armed Forces Killed in Line of Duty • Surviving Spouse of First Responder Killed in Line of Duty • Partially Disabled Veteran or Survivor (not limited to your homestead).

4. Do all homes qualify for a homestead exemption?

No, only a homeowner's principal residence qualifies. To qualify, a home must meet the definition of a residence homestead: The home's owner must be an individual (for example: not a corporation or other business entity) and use the home as his or her principal residence on January 1 of the tax year.

5. What is a homestead?

A homestead can be a separate structure, condominium or a manufactured home located on owned or leased land, as long as the individual living in the home owns it. A homestead can include up to 20 acres, if the land is owned by the homeowner and used as a yard or for another purpose related to the residential use of the homestead.

6. How do I apply for a homestead exemption?

An exemption application must be submitted to WCAD by mail, email, or fax. The Residence Homestead Exemption Application form and other exemption forms are available from the Forms page of our website. Applications may also be obtained from our office or request an application by phone at 979-277-3740 between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

Attach all documents required by the application.

The address listed on your TX driver's license or TX ID card must match your homestead address.

If applying for the Disabled Person's exemption, you must provide a current dated statement from the Social Security Administration showing that you are disabled and the date your disability began or a current letter of verification stating that you are disabled and the date your disability began.

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Even though you qualify immediately for the Age 65 or Older / Age 55 or Older Surviving Spouse or Disabled Person Exemption, you do *not* qualify for the Homestead exemption until *the first January 1 that you occupied the property*.

7. Do I apply for a homestead exemption annually?

No, only a one-time application is required, unless by written notice, the Chief Appraiser requests the property owner to file a new application. However, a new application is required when a property owner's residence homestead is changed.

8. May I continue to receive the residence homestead exemption on my home if I move away temporarily?

If you temporarily move away from your home, you may continue to receive this exemption, if you do not establish another principal residence and you intend to return within two years, or if you are a resident of a health facility, or if you are in military service serving outside of the United States. You may receive only one Homestead Exemption. You should notify the Appraisal District when you temporarily move away and when you intend to return, including the reason you are temporarily away.

9. What other exemptions are available?

Cemeteries • Charitable Organizations • Religious Organizations • Private Schools • Youth Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Development Associations • Miscellaneous Associations • Historical Sites • Pollution Control Property • Personal vehicle used in business. Details on each exemption can be found on the Exemptions page of our website.

10. What types of exemptions require an annual application?

Annual applications are required by April 30 for several types of exemptions including:

Property Tax Abatements • Historic Sites

11. Can I get an extension of the April 30th exemption filing deadline?

For good cause shown, the chief appraiser may extend the application filing deadline once for a period not to exceed 60 days. If a person required to apply for an exemption in a given year fails to file a completed application form timely, the person will not receive the exemption for that year. If the chief appraiser learns of any reason indicating that an exemption should not have been granted, the exemption will be cancelled and written notice of the cancellation will be delivered within five days after the date the exemption is cancelled.

For a Homestead Exemption, you may file a late application for a residence homestead exemption, including a 100% disabled veteran homestead exemption, no later than two years after the tax delinquency date.

12. Do I need to reapply once the exemption is granted and it does not require annual application?

If the chief appraiser grants your exemption(s), you do not need to reapply annually. However, by written notice accompanied by the appropriate application, you may be required to file a new application to confirm your current qualifications for the exemption(s).

13. Must I notify the Appraisal District if my entitlement to an exemption ends?

Yes. A person who receives an exemption that is not required to be claimed annually must notify the Appraisal District in writing before May 1 after the entitlement to the exemption ends.

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14. Is it true that once I become 65 years of age, I will not have to pay anymore taxes?

No, that is not necessarily true. The amount of the exemptions that are granted by each taxing entity is subtracted from the appraised value of your residence and the taxes are calculated on that "lower value." In addition, when you turn 65, you may receive a "tax ceiling" for your total school taxes; that is, the school taxes on your residence cannot increase as long as you own and live in that home. If you significantly improve your home (other than ordinary repairs and maintenance), tax ceilings can increase. For example, if you add a swimming pool, a garage, a storage building, and a room to your home, or significantly remodel your home, your tax ceiling can rise. It will also change if you move to a new home. The tax ceiling is set at the amount you pay in the year that you qualify for the senior citizen exemption. The county, city or special district may adopt a tax ceiling.

15. How do I transfer my age 65 or older or disability tax ceiling?

You may transfer the same percentage of school taxes paid to another qualified homestead within the state of Texas. If the county, city or special district grants the limitation, you may transfer the same percentage of taxes paid to another qualified homestead within that same taxing unit.

To transfer your Tax Ceiling, you must request a Tax Ceiling Certificate from our office. The Certificate may be obtained from our office or request one by phone at 979-277-3740 between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

Once the Tax Ceiling Certificate has been processed, it will be sent to the appropriate tax office for processing.

16. If I am disabled and age 65 or older, can I claim both exemptions in the same tax year?

You may not claim both the Age 65 or Older and a Disabled Person Exemption in the same tax year from the same taxing unit. However, you may choose either exemption if a taxing unit has adopted both exemptions.

Additionally, if you previously qualified for a Disabled Person Exemption and you turn age 65 you may change to the Age 65 or Older exemption. If the Appraisal District has your date of birth on file, the exemption will be automatically updated. Otherwise, you must complete a new Residence Homestead Exemption application and apply for the Age 65 or Older exemption.

Your surviving spouse is eligible to retain the tax ceiling from the Age 65 or Older exemption.

17. Who is eligible for a 100% Disabled Veteran Exemption or Surviving Spouse of Disabled Veteran who received the 100% Disabled Veteran's Exemption?

You may qualify for this exemption if you are a disabled veteran who receives from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its successor:

- 1) 100% disability compensation due to a service-connected disability; **and**
- 2) a rating of 100% disabled or individual unemployability; or if you are a surviving spouse of a disabled veteran who qualified for the 100% Disabled Veteran exemption at the time of death and 1) you have not remarried since the death of the disabled veteran and 2) the property was your residence homestead when the disabled veteran died and remains your residence homestead.

If you qualify for a 100% disabled veteran's exemption on or after January 1, 2012, you may receive the exemption for the applicable portion of that tax year immediately on qualification for the exemption.

The Residence Homestead Exemption Application form and other exemption forms are available from the Forms page of our website. Applications may also be obtained from our office or request an application by phone at 979-277-3740 between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

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18. Does a non-profit organization automatically receive a property tax exemption?

No. Often organizations mistakenly believe they are entitled to a property tax exemption because they have received a federal income tax exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or an exemption from State sales taxes. The state constitutional requirements for property tax exemptions are different. A non-profit organization may qualify for a total exemption from property taxes, but they must apply to the Appraisal District for the exemption by April 30. Many exemption applications are available on the Forms page of our website.

Applications may also be obtained from our office or request an application by phone at 979-277-3740 between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

19. If a religious or charitable organization purchases property during the year may the organization receive an exemption on the new property for that year?

Yes, the religious or charitable organization may receive a property tax exemption for the year in which it purchases qualifying property. To receive the exemption for that year, the organization has to file for the exemption within one year of acquiring the property.

20. What is heir property?

Heir property is property owned by one or more individuals, where at least one owner claims the property as a residence homestead, and the property was acquired by will, transfer on death deed, or intestacy.

An heir property owner not specifically identified as the residence homestead owner on a deed or other recorded instrument in the county where the property is located must provide:

- an affidavit establishing ownership of interest in the property (See Form 50-114-A)
- a copy of the prior property owner's death certificate;
- a copy of the property's most recent utility bill; and
- a citation of any court record relating to the applicant's ownership of the property, if available.

Each heir property owner who occupies the property as a principal residence, other than the applicant, must provide an affidavit that authorizes the submission of this application (See Form 50-114-A).