

Deadline for homeowners to register and receive Basic STAR Exemptions December 31, 2013

This week, thousands of homeowners across Central New York will receive letters from the state tax department telling them how to keep their STAR exemptions for next year. The new process is designed to eliminate "double-dipping" by people who have the School Tax Relief exemptions on more than one property. (It's only allowed on your primary residence.)

Central New Yorkers will be the first in the state to get their letters from the Department of Taxation and Finance telling them how to re-apply. The first batch of letters will be mailed today. We've gotten lots of questions about this, so here are some of those questions and some answers

Q: My school tax bill is due in a few weeks. Do I have to re-apply before then? A: No. Your current exemption is valid for this school year. The re-application is only for 2014 and beyond.

Q: How do I apply? A: Online, by phone or at special public events, including the State Fair. The letter you receive from the tax department will have detailed instructions, along with a unique code number for your property.

Q: What if I don't have access to a computer or the internet? A: You can call 518-457-2036. The state is assigning 100 people in its call center just to handle STAR calls, and has added evening and Saturday hours. You can call from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

Q: What will I need to re-apply? A: Your code number that comes in the mail and the Social Security numbers of every owner of the home. You'll also have to verify you make less than \$500,000 a year, verify that the home is your primary residence, and confirm you don't have a residency-based benefit in another state.

Q: What if I lose the letter, or don't receive it? A: You can look up your property on the tax department website or attend a tax department public event. (We'll report on these when they're announced.)

Q: What if I have a homestead exemption in another state? A: You won't qualify for STAR in New York. You can only have one primary residence.

Q: Do I have to apply to the state if I have an Enhanced STAR exemption for senior citizens? A: No. This program does not apply to Enhanced STAR.

Q: How long do I have to apply? A: Registration begins Monday, and the deadline is Dec. 31. The tax department wants to finalize a list for municipal assessors by March 1, 2014.

Q: Will I have to do this every year? A: No -- this is a one-time application for your current primary residence.

Q: What if I buy a new house? A: You'll still have to apply to your local assessor for a STAR exemption.

Q: What if the tax department denies me an exemption? A: You can appeal to the state Board of Real Property Tax Services. There will be no appeal to your local board of assessment review.

Q: How much does the state estimate it will save through this program? A: Nobody knows for sure. The state comptroller estimated this year that duplicate and fraudulent STAR exemptions might cost the state \$73 million.

For More Information please see: <http://www.tax.ny.gov/>