

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

### **What is the Appraisal District's role in the tax system?**

There are three main parts to the property tax system in Texas:

1. An Appraisal District in each county sets the value of property each year.
2. An Appraisal Review Board settles disagreements between property owners and the Appraisal District about property values, exemptions and they also make determinations on challenges initiated by taxing units;
3. Local taxing units, which include the county, city, school district and other special districts, decide how much money they will spend each year. This, in turn, determines the total amount of taxes that property owners must pay that year.

### **What is a rendition?**

A rendition is a statement listing taxable property and the name and address of the owner. The statement should also contain an owner's estimate of the property's value. The deadline for filing a rendition is April 15<sup>th</sup>. Be sure to identify your property and attach any documentation that you may have such as closing statements, appraisals or sales of similar properties in your neighborhood.

### **How do I update my address?**

There is a change of address form available for download on the MCAD website ([www.matagorda-cad.org](http://www.matagorda-cad.org)), or you may pick one up from our office (2225 Avenue G in Bay City).

### **How do I get a plat map of my property?**

Call or come in to our office (address above) to request a copy of your property's plat. There is a charge of \$4.50 per plat.

### **What should I do if my property is linking incorrectly through the map search portal?**

If your property is linking incorrectly, please contact our office at 979-244-2031 or via email at [mcad@co.matagorda.tx.us](mailto:mcad@co.matagorda.tx.us) and refer your questions to our GIS/Mapping Clerk.

### **How can I obtain information about Tax Foreclosure Sale property?**

You can obtain tax sale information by calling the Tax Office at 979-789-5100.

## EXEMPTION-RELATED QUESTIONS

### **What exemptions are available?**

Some of the most common exemptions available include:

- General Residential Homestead Exemption
- Disabled Person Exemption
- Age 65 or Older Exemption
- Surviving Spouse of an Individual Who Qualified for the Age 65 or Older Exemption
- 100% Disabled Veteran's Exemption
- Surviving Spouse of a Disabled Veteran Who Received the 100% Disabled Veteran's Exemption
- Religious & Charitable Organization Exemptions
- Freeport Exemption

### **How do I apply for exemptions?**

Exemption applications can be picked up from our office during normal business hours (M-F; 8am-5pm). You may also have an application mailed to you by calling our office to request it, or some are available for download from our website. The Texas Comptroller's website also has all exemption applications available for download at

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/forms>. We accept exemption applications via email to [mcad@co.matagorda.tx.us](mailto:mcad@co.matagorda.tx.us), regular mail, or in-person drop off at our office.

**Do I have to reapply for my homestead exemption annually?**

An initial application is required to establish your residence homestead exemption. A taxpayer may only carry a residence homestead exemption on a single property at a time and, in most cases, you will only apply for the exemption the one, initial time. However, a new application may be requested by the Chief Appraiser at any time.

**Is it true that once I become 65 years of age, I will not have to pay any more taxes?**

No, that is not necessarily true. The amount of the exemptions that are granted by each taxing entity is subtracted from the market value of your residence, and then taxes are calculated on that lower value, called the "taxable value". In addition, when you turn 65, your taxes for the school district in which you reside are frozen at the level established during the first year of qualification for the senior citizen exemption. While it is possible to be completely exempt from paying taxes with a Homestead and Over 65 exemption, this is not normally the case.

**What is a homestead cap value?**

Effective January 1, 2008, the Texas Property Tax Code, Section 23.23, states that the annual assessment of a residential homestead is limited to a 10% increase. The following rules apply to homestead cap values:

1. Limitations take effect one year after you receive your Homestead Exemption.
2. Limitations do not apply to new improvements added in that year (i.e. additions, pools, garages).
3. Limitations are removed when a property sells.
4. Limitations will be shown on the Notice as "Capped Value".
5. All granted exemptions are subtracted from Cap Value instead of Market Value with the exception of the local option percentage. The local option percentage is subtracted from Market Value.
6. Capped value minus applicable exemptions equals "taxable value".
7. The Capped Value is not a lifetime limitation.

**APPRAISAL-RELATED QUESTIONS**

**How did the Appraisal District arrive at my value?**

Utilizing comparable sales, income and/or cost data, an appraiser applies generally accepted appraisal techniques to derive a value for your property.

**What is fair market value?**

Fair market value means the price at which a property would transfer for cash or its equivalent under prevailing market conditions if:

1. exposed for sale in the open market with a reasonable time for the seller to find a purchaser;
2. both the seller and the purchaser know of all the uses and purposes to which the property is adapted and for which it is capable of being used and of the enforceable restrictions on its use; and
3. both the seller and purchaser seek to maximize their gains and neither is in a position to take advantage of the exigencies of the other.

**Circuit Breaker Limitation**

The circuit breaker provision of the Property Tax Code limits the amount the Appraisal District can increase your property value. Beginning in 2024, real property valued at \$5 million or less will benefit from a 20% limitation on the net appraised value of the property used to calculate property taxes, with the exclusion of land receiving the agriculture-use special appraisal and homestead properties that already receive the 10% limited appraised value cap. This means the appraised value of qualifying real property is limited to an increase of no more than 20% per year unless new improvements, excluding ordinary maintenance, have been made.

This limitation takes effect on January 1 of the tax year following the first tax year in which the owner owns the property. If you owned your property as of January 1, 2023, you will receive this appraised value limitation in 2024. You must own the property for at least one full calendar year (January through December) before you are eligible for a 20% limitation. Your property will now carry two values:

1. the circuit breaker cap value which is the value that your taxes will be based on, and
2. the market value which is the true value of the property.

For example, the appraised value of your qualifying real property was \$100,000 last year. This year the Appraisal District appraises your property at \$125,000. No new improvements or additions have been made to the property since last year. The circuit breaker value is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Step 1: } \$100,000 \times 20\% = \$20,000$$

$$\text{Step 2: } \$100,000 + \$20,000 = \$120,000$$

The market value of your property will remain at \$125,000; however, your taxes will be based on the circuit breaker value of \$120,000.

The circuit breaker limitation will expire on January 1 of the first tax year that the owner no longer owns the property. Should you sell your property, the limitation on its appraised value will be removed, and the tax base will increase to the property's current market value until the new owner is eligible for the same benefit.

Each property that qualifies will receive a Notice of Appraised Value that specifies the market value of the property as of January 1 as well as a net appraised value that will be the lesser amount of:

- last year's net appraised value plus 20%, or
- this year's market value.

The circuit breaker currently applies to the 2024, 2025, and 2026 tax years and expires on December 31, 2026. The appraised value that the circuit breaker applies to is set at \$5,000,000 or less for 2024; however, the State Comptroller can increase or decrease the appraised value limit for 2025 and 2026 based on the consumer price index.

You are not required to submit an application to receive a circuit breaker limitation. The appraisal district will automatically apply and calculate these benefits every year.

#### **Why are you inspecting my property?**

In order to make accurate appraisals on every property in our jurisdiction, we have to visit them periodically to ensure that the data used in making the appraisal is still correct. For instance, since we last visited your home:

1. the condition of the structure could have changed;
2. the Appraisal District could have received a copy of a building permit indicating that a room was being added, the house was being remodeled, or some amenity such as a pool or detached garage was being added or removed from the property.

\*\* All MCAD residential building measurements are done from the exterior, with individual measurements rounded to the closest foot. This measurement includes all closet space, hallways, and interior staircases. Attached garages are not included in the square footage of living area, but valued separately. Living area above *attached* garages is included in the square footage living area of the dwelling. Living area above *detached* garages is not included in the square footage living area of the dwelling but is valued separately. This method is used on all residential properties in Matagorda County to ensure the uniformity of square footage of living area measurements district-wide. There can be a reasonable variance between the MCAD square footage and a taxpayer's square footage measurement, especially if the taxpayer's square footage measurement was an interior measurement or an exterior measurement rounded to the inch instead of to the foot.

#### **Why did my value change?**

When an area is selected for reappraisal, value changes may occur for several reasons:

1. a correction of the data, such as a change in square footage, a pool not previously accounted for or a correction of property characteristics;
2. a value may be changed for equalization purposes;
3. sales information may indicate the current appraised value is higher/lower than fair market value.

### **What is an improvement?**

Improvement means:

1. a building, structure, fixture, or fence erected on or affixed to land; or
2. a transportable structure that is designed to be occupied for residential or business purposes, whether or not it is affixed to land, if the owner of the structure owns the land on which it is located, unless the structure is unoccupied and held for sale or normally is located at a particular place only temporarily.

## **PROTEST-RELATED QUESTIONS**

### **How do I protest my value?**

To protest an appraisal value, a taxpayer must notify the Appraisal District in writing with their intent to protest by May 15<sup>th</sup> or 30 days from the date of the Notice of Appraised Value. If no Notice of Appraised Value was generated by the Appraisal District (not all properties require one), a protest may still be filed with a deadline of May 15<sup>th</sup>.

The taxpayer's notice of protest need not be an official form, however, the Appraisal District does include a Taxpayer's Notice of Protest form along with the Notice of Appraised Value that the taxpayer is welcome to use. Or, if you did not receive a Notice of Appraised Value, you can contact our office via phone or email to request an official Notice of Protest form or download one from our website or the Texas Comptroller's website. In lieu of an official protest form, you may submit a simple letter stating the protesting property owner's name, identifying the subject property and indicating an apparent dissatisfaction with some determination of the appraisal office.

The written protest notice, in whatever form the taxpayer uses, must be sent to the Matagorda County Appraisal District via mail or be hand-delivered to 2225 Avenue G, Bay City, TX 77414.

### **Why did I not receive a Notice of Appraised Value this year?**

You will only receive a Notice of Appraised Value if you rendered your property, if there is a value change of at least \$1,000, or if there is an ownership change.

### **What if I can't physically attend a protest hearing for some reason or just don't want to?**

There are multiple ways in which a taxpayer can appear for a protest hearing:

1. in person
2. via telephone conference call
3. via videoconference
4. via written affidavit (must be signed and notarized)

The taxpayer must let the Appraisal District know in writing on the notice of protest the manner in which they will appear. If you elect to protest via telephone conference call or videoconference, your evidence must be submitted a minimum of 48 hours prior to the scheduled hearing via a signed and notarized affidavit. An Affidavit of Evidence form is available for download on our website as well as the Texas Comptroller's website.

You may also elect to have an agent represent you in handling your protest. If you do wish to have an agent represent you, we must have a signed Authorization of Agent form on file. Please note, once you have authorized an agent to represent you we can only communicate with that specified agent and that authorization will remain in effect until you submit a Revocation of Agent form to us. Both the authorization and revocation of agent forms are available for download on our website as well as the Texas Comptroller's website and can be submitted to our office either by regular mail or by email.

**Our website as well as the Texas Comptroller's website contain more detailed information about the operation of Appraisal Review Boards and, in particular, how protest hearings are scheduled/rescheduled and conducted.**

## TAX COLLECTION RELATED QUESTIONS

### **Who sets the tax rates?**

The governing body (city council, school board, county commissioners) of each taxing entity sets the rates for their jurisdiction. The taxing units decide what services they will provide in the coming year and how much money they will need to provide those services. Each taxing unit adopts a tax rate that they feel will be sufficient to raise the needed tax dollars.

### **What are the taxes on this property? How much are my taxes?**

**The Appraisal District does not levy taxes, set the tax rates, or collect tax payments. As such, the Appraisal District does not capture the amount of taxes on each property. You must call the county tax office for that information (979-789-5100).**

**MORE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE TEXAS COMPTROLLER'S WEBSITE:**

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/faqs.php>