

MEDIA RELEASE

County of Santa Clara
Office of the County Assessor

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Lawrence E. Stone, Assessor

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Property Tax relief: You may already be qualified!

While not exactly Ed McMahon arriving at your door with a big sweepstakes win, County Assessor Larry Stone's letter to over 14,000 property owners will come as welcome news to many.

This week, over 14,000 property owners will receive a letter from the Assessor informing them that they may be eligible for as much as a \$7,000 reduction in the assessed value on their home. This may then result in an annual property tax savings of approximately \$70. There is no charge to submit the one-page application and apply for this benefit. "As Assessor, I have a legal responsibility to not only identify increases in assessed value, but also properties that qualify for reduction," said Stone. The letter is being mailed to homeowners who do not currently have the exemption.

Traditionally, most homeowners apply for this benefit when they purchase their home. As of July 2006, there were 280,177 properties that received an exemption of \$7,000 in assessed value. However, not all property owners apply for, or are aware of this property tax benefit. By sending letters to those property owners most likely to be eligible, the Assessor believes the accuracy of the Assessment Roll will improve and time-consuming, late filings and corrections will be reduced.

"We also hope this effort will discourage companies that are soliciting potential qualifying homeowners and offering to provide the application form for a fee of \$25. It is as close as you get to a scam. No taxpayer should have to pay \$25 to apply for a homeowner's exemption when we will provide it for free," said Stone.

To qualify for the exemption, the property owner must own and occupy the property as his/her principal place of residence on January 1, or within 90 days after the date the property was acquired, or new construction completed. A home does not qualify for the exemption unless it is occupied as the principal place of residence. Vacation and/or secondary homes do not qualify. In addition, individuals who rent or no longer occupy their home after receiving the benefit are required to notify the Assessor of the change. Property owners are entitled to only one Homeowner's Exemption at a time within California.

Attached is a copy of the letter to homeowners. Property owners can verify that they have the exemption by examining the annual property tax bill mailed each October. If the Homeowner's Exemption line shows any amount other than zero, the exemption is valid and no further action is necessary. Property owners can verify electronically on the Assessor's Property Lookup website at www.scc-assessor.org/ari.

To receive a one-page claim form, a homeowner may call the Assessor's Exemption Unit at (408) 299-6460, or e-mail the Assessor's Office at Exemptions@asr.co.scl.ca.us. When contacting or e-mailing the Assessor's Office the address and assessor parcel number should be included.

County of Santa Clara

Office of the County Assessor
Exemption Division

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HOMEOWNER'S EXEMPTION CLAIM FORM

Our records indicate you may be eligible for additional property tax relief. Currently your property does not receive the exemption created for homeowners.

The Homeowner's Exemption reduces the assessed value on an owner-occupied residence up to a maximum of \$7,000. This results in an annual property tax savings of approximately \$70. Once a Homeowners Exemption claim is filed, it is not necessary to file each year as long as the residence continues to be owned and occupied by the property owner. There is no charge to file this claim.

To qualify for the exemption, the property owner must occupy the property as his/her principal place of residence on January 1, or within 90 days after the date the property was acquired, or new construction completed.

A home does not qualify for the exemption unless it is occupied as the principal place of residence. Therefore, vacation and/or secondary homes do not qualify. In addition, should you rent or no longer occupy your home after receiving the benefit, it is your responsibility to notify the Assessor of the change. Property owners are entitled to only one Homeowner's Exemption at a time within the State of California.

To receive 100% of the exemption, a claim must be received or postmarked on or before 5:00 pm on February 15. If a claim is received between February 16 and 5:00 pm on December 10, 80% of the exemption will be provided to the homeowner. Upon approval the reduction will be indicated in the October Tax Bill.

A claim form has been enclosed for your convenience. If you have any questions there is additional information on our website, www.scc-assessor.org, or you may contact the Assessor's Exemption Unit at (408) 299-5500 or email the Assessor's Office at exemptions@asr.sccgov.org. When contacting the Assessor's Office please include the property address.