

INSTRUCTIONS

Cumberland County Application for Homestead and Farmstead Exclusions

The Taxpayer Relief Act, Act 1 of Special Session 1 of 2006, was signed into law by Governor Rendell on June 27, 2006. *The Taxpayer Relief Act* provides two separate mechanisms to reduce property tax bills. First, each school district (except the Pittsburgh, Scranton and Philadelphia School Districts) was required to conduct a voter referendum to determine whether or not to impose an additional local income tax to be used to reduce property taxes. Second, the *Taxpayer Relief Act* also provides for property tax reduction allocations to be distributed by the Commonwealth to each school district. Either type of property tax reduction will be through a "Homestead and possible Farmstead Exclusion." Under a Homestead or Farmstead Property Tax Exclusion, the assessed value of each homestead or farmstead is reduced by the amount of the exclusion before the property tax is computed. You are not guaranteed a school Homestead or Farmstead Exclusion unless and until an additional income tax for purposes of granting a Homestead or Farmstead Exclusion is approved by voter referendum or sufficient funds have been collected through gaming proceeds or other dedicated funding to permit property tax reduction allocations to be made by the Commonwealth.

To be eligible to receive any school property tax relief for the tax years beginning July 1 or January 1, this form must be filed by the preceding March 1. Your school district is required to notify you by December 31 of each year if your property is not approved for the Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion or if your approval is due to expire.

BASIC INFORMATION

Note: If you are filing a pre-printed application, correct any incorrect or incomplete information. If no changes are required, proceed to *Number 6*.

1. Fill in your name and the name of other owners of record, such as your spouse or a co-owner of the property. The application must be signed by an owner for whom the property is his or her primary residence. If the property has more than one owner, signatures of additional owners are not required.
2. Fill in the address of the property for which you are seeking an exclusion.
3. Fill in your municipality. If you are not sure what your municipality is, contact the Cumberland County Assessment Office at (717) 240-6350.
4. Fill in your school district. If you are not sure what your school district is, contact the Cumberland County Assessment Office at (717) 240-6350.
5. If your mailing address differs from the address of the property for which you are seeking a Homestead Exclusion, fill in your mailing address.
6. List telephone numbers where you can be reached during the day, and the evening, if you are unavailable during the day.

HOMESTEAD INFORMATION

7. Only a primary residence of an owner of the property may receive the Homestead Exclusion. This is where you intend to reside permanently until you move to another home. You may be asked to provide proof that this property is your primary residence, such as your driver's license, your voter registration card, your personal income tax form, or your local earned income tax form.
8. Do you have another residence that you claim as your primary residence? For instance, do you claim another state as your primary residence, or another county in Pennsylvania? The Homestead Exclusion can only be claimed once for a place of primary residence. You may not claim this property as your primary residence if you claim another property as a primary residence or if you, your spouse, or a co-owner of the property receive a Homestead tax abatement or other Homestead benefit from any other county or state. **Do not file more than one application.**
- 9A. If you live in a unit of a cooperative or a condominium and you pay all or a portion of your real property taxes jointly through a management agent or association, rather than paying your taxes separately from other units, check "yes."
- 9B. If you answered, "yes" to *Question 9A*, please indicate your proportionate share of ownership. You may be asked to provide a contact to confirm this information.

- 10A. Check "yes" if the property for which you are seeking a Homestead Exclusion is used for other purposes, such as a business or rental property. For example: Do you claim part of your residence as a home office or deduct expenses for the business use of your residence on your state or federal tax return?
- 10B. If you answered "yes" to *Question 10A*, please indicate what percentage of the property is used as business or rental property.
11. If known, fill in the parcel number of the property for which you are seeking a Homestead Exclusion. You can find the parcel number on your real property tax bill. If you do not have a real property tax bill, contact the Cumberland County Assessment Office at (717) 240-6350.

FARMSTEAD INFORMATION

Only complete this section (Questions 12, 13A, 13B, 13C, and 14) if you are applying for a Farmstead Exclusion. This is only applicable to buildings and structures used for commercial-agricultural production. If you answer "yes" to Questions 13A, 13B and 13C, you may be asked to provide proof that the buildings and structures are used for commercial-agricultural activity, such as the net income or loss schedule from your state or federal income tax forms.

12. Only buildings and structures on farms that are at least ten contiguous acres in area and used as the primary residence of the owner are eligible for a Farmstead Exclusion. Land is not eligible for the Farmstead Exclusion. If your property includes at least ten contiguous acres of farmland, check "yes."
13. Check "yes" if the buildings or structures are used primarily to:
- A. Produce or store farm products produced on the farm for the purpose of commercial-agricultural production.
 - B. House animals raised or maintained on the farm for the purpose of commercial-agricultural production.
 - C. Store agricultural supplies or machinery and equipment used on the farm in commercial-agricultural production.
14. Check "yes" if any farm buildings or structures receive an abatement of property tax under any other law (excluding *Clean and Green*). *Clean and Green* assessments reduce land value only; therefore, you should check "no" if *Clean and Green* is your only abatement.

Change in Use

If your property is approved as a Homestead or Farmstead property and the use changes so that the property no longer qualifies for the Homestead or Farmstead Exclusion, you must notify the Assessment Office within 45 days of the change in use. If the use of your property changes and you are not sure if it still qualifies for the Homestead or Farmstead Exclusion, you should contact the Cumberland County Assessment Office.

False or Fraudulent Applications

The Assessment Office may select, randomly or otherwise, applications to review for false or fraudulent information. Any person who files an application that contains false information, or who does not notify the Assessment Office of a change in use that no longer qualifies as homestead or farmstead property, may:

- Be required to pay the taxes that would have been due but for the false application, plus interest.
- Be required to pay a penalty equal to 10% of the unpaid taxes.
- If convicted of filing a false application, be guilty of a misdemeanor of the third degree and be sentenced to pay a fine not exceeding \$2,500.

This application must be signed by an owner for whom this property is his or her primary residence. If the property has more than one owner, signatures of additional owners are not required. By signing and dating this application, the applicant is affirming or swearing that all information contained in the application is true and correct. Applications must be filed before March 1st of each year. Please return to:

Cumberland County Assessment Office
One Courthouse Square, Room 107
Carlisle, PA 17013

If you have questions regarding the Homestead or Farmstead Exclusion, please contact the Cumberland County Assessment Office at (717) 240-6350. Cumberland County Assessment Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.