

## Pay for Health Card While Renewing Visa

11 December 2008

DUBAI - Expatriates renewing their residence visas in Dubai will have to shell out an extra Dh300 for the health card that is now compulsory.

Delayed by five months, the rule caught many unawares when it came into effect unannounced on December 1. Residents now have to pay a total of Dh550 instead of the Dh250 charged for the medical fitness test only earlier. Before a residence visa is stamped/renewed, applicants have to undergo screening for diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis B & C, tuberculosis and syphilis.

Though a person applying for residency in the UAE for the first time has to obtain a health card, renewing it had not been compulsory until now.

*Khaleej Times* had reported on July 1 about the new medical fitness rules that were due to come into effect immediately but were put off by the Department of Health and Medical Services until the year end. A health card (valid for one year) was also made compulsory for renewing visas but the date when it would come into effect was not announced.

(The health cardholder can avail of basic health services at low cost only in government hospitals and clinics.)

As per the new rules, health insurance policyholders do not require a health card, though the policy certificate has to be attested by Dohms at a cost of Dh200.

Maisa Al Bustani, Head of Medical Fitness Centre at Dohms, had explained to *Khaleej Times* earlier, "If the resident does not hold a health card and has a valid health insurance policy, Department of Health and Medical Services will charge Dh200 to attest the policy certificate before the screening is done."

However, residents who have valid insurance policy said they were forced to pay for the health card when they went for visa renewal.

"When I recently went for my medical fitness test, a requirement for visa renewal, I was asked to pay Dh300 for a health card.

"When I explained to the official that I was holding a health insurance policy, he insisted that I still had to pay for the card," said Mohammed Afzal, a sales manager.

Farid Hussain, another resident, said that when he informed the official about his insurance policy, the official said it was not his concern.

"I had to pay for the card despite holding a policy," he added.

Department of Health and Medical Services officials were not available for comments because of holidays.

{ Khaleej Times }