

Employees' Retirement System
of Georgia

RETIREE

Newsletter



New Health and Dental Rates

2018 health and dental insurance rates will go into effect December 31, 2017 for your January 2018 coverage. The new health and dental deductions will affect your December 2017 net benefit amount. Payment advices can be viewed from your Retiree Account Access at <https://secure.ers.ga.gov> or through your bank account. For more information about premium rates, please visit <http://team.georgia.gov/my-benefits/>.

In this Issue:

Tax Information	2
State Holidays - 2018	2
Guidelines for the Death of a Retiree	3-4
Did You Know You Get MORE at Retirement?	5
Online Tools for Retirees	6
Benefit Verification Letters	
People Spotlight - Customer Care Group	7
Four Steps to Staying Secure - Personal Data Protection	8



Tax Information

Federal Withholding Changes

Generally, pension and annuity payments are subject to federal income tax withholding. Each year in January, ERSGA updates its systems' withholding tables to reflect the latest IRS guidance. These changes may impact your 2018 monthly net payment amounts.

You can access your payment advices either on the ERSGA [website](#) or through your bank account. This may also be a good time to review your tax withholding levels for 2018.

Retirement Income Exclusion (GA Residents Only)

Taxpayers who are 62 or older, or permanently and totally disabled regardless of age, may be eligible for a retirement income adjustment on their **Georgia tax return**. Retirement income includes:

- Income from pensions and annuities
- Interest income
- Dividend income
- Net income from rental property
- Capital gains income
- Income from royalties

Please contact the Georgia Department of Revenue for more information on claiming the exclusion.

2017 Tax Documents – 1099s

If you received pension payments, a lump sum refund, or a death benefit during calendar year 2017, the payments are reported to the Internal Revenue Service. Individual retirees and beneficiaries will receive a Form 1099 (Form 1099-R for Qualified Plans and 1099-MISC for Non-Qualified Plans). Some retirees may receive more than one of the above listed forms if they received more than one type of payment, e.g., a payment as a beneficiary of another member's benefit and monthly benefit payments from their own retirement. PSR 1099s will be mailed from GaBreeze separately.

The 1099 shows the total amount of pension payments for the calendar year, as well as total federal and state income tax withheld. This document is necessary when filing your income tax returns. All 1099s will be mailed on or before January 31, 2018. The form will also be available through your *Retiree Account Access* at <https://secure.ers.ga.gov>.

When you receive your documents, **please review them carefully**. If you have any questions regarding your 1099, please contact Whitney Distretti at whitney.distretti@ers.ga.gov or call our office at 404-350-6300 or 1-800-805-4609 (outside metro Atlanta area). *Note: ERSGA does not give tax advice. For questions about your taxes, please consult an accountant.*

State Holidays - 2018

New Year's Day	Monday, January 1
State Holiday	January 19 - observed on Friday, November 23
MLK, Jr.'s Birthday	Monday, January 15
Washington's Birthday	February 19 - observed on Monday, December 24
State Holiday	April 26 - observed on Monday, April 23
Memorial Day	Monday, May 28
Independence Day	Wednesday, July 4
Labor Day	Monday, September 3
Columbus Day	Monday, October 8
Veterans Day	November 11 - observed on Monday, November 12
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 22
Christmas Day	Tuesday, December 25



Guidelines for the Death of a Retiree

Helping to make a difficult time a little easier.

Prior to Death - Beneficiaries

√ **Keep your beneficiary information current for ALL plans.**

You should update your beneficiary information for:

- Address changes
- Death of a beneficiary
- A change in marital status
- The birth of a child

In addition to your ERSGA Plan, beneficiary information must be maintained for the following (when applicable):

- Peach State Reserves (PSR) 401(k) and 457 Plans
- Group Term Life Insurance (GTLI)

How to review and update your beneficiary designation:

- **ERS and/or GTLI:**
Log in to your account on the ERSGA website. <https://secure.ers.ga.gov>
- **Peach State Reserves and Flexible Benefits:**
Log in to your account on the GaBreeze website at <http://gabreeze.ga.gov> or call 1-877-342-7339.

√ **Inform your beneficiaries of their designation.**

Inform all named beneficiaries to avoid delays in payment processing.

After Death

√ **Report death to ALL plans.**

Deaths must be reported to **ERSGA** for all pension plans and GTLI benefits and to **GaBreeze** for benefits from the PSR 401(k) or 457 Plan accounts and for Flexible Benefits. Death certificates will be required by both ERSGA and GaBreeze for benefit processing.

What to Expect

Designated beneficiaries will be notified by ERSGA and the PSR plan administrator (if applicable) upon receipt of a death certificate. In cases where a beneficiary has not been designated by the member, the payment may either be due to the spouse* [for 401(k)] or the estate (for 457 and pension plans) of the deceased.

General Information

√ **Stay organized.**

To facilitate a quicker payment process to your beneficiaries and to ease the stress on your loved ones in a difficult time, it is helpful to keep an organized file outlining:

- All accounts, including account numbers
- Beneficiaries of each account
- Contact information for all beneficiaries
- Contact information for all institutions holding your accounts

(continued)

Guidelines for the Death of a Retiree (continued)

Privacy Laws

Any benefit payment that may be due to a beneficiary cannot be disclosed to any party other than the beneficiary (other parties include executors of the estate and/or any co-beneficiaries named on the account).

Estate as Beneficiary**

In the event that the deceased's estate is named as a beneficiary, the executor or executrix of the estate must provide ERSGA with a Letter of Testamentary for any payment to be processed to the deceased's estate. In the case of the estate being named as a beneficiary for a Peach State Reserves 401(k) or 457 account, the same documents should be provided to Georgia Breeze for processing. **Note:** *Certain benefit payment options (e.g., Option 2 100% Survivor Benefit) cannot be paid to an estate, only to a living beneficiary.*

Reporting a Death

ERS and/or GTLI: Call 404-350-6300 or 1-800-805-4609 if outside of metro-Atlanta area.

Peach State Reserves: 1-877-342-7339

**If the deceased was married at the time of death and had a 401(k) plan, the account will automatically be designated to the surviving spouse. For non-spousal beneficiaries to claim a 401(k) plan from a married deceased member, the member's spouse must complete and have on file a 401(k) spousal beneficiary waiver prior to the member's death.*

***For benefits under \$10,000, an estate may not have to be established. Please contact our office for more information.*

Word Scramble: Managing Retirement

SPENINO

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

OCNUACT

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ARCNEBEIIFY

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ITDGNILWOH

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ONMCEI

--	--	--	--	--	--

YANMPET

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Solution on page 9

*Did You Know You Get **MORE** at Retirement?*

ERSGA (in partnership with the Georgia Technology Authority) is pleased to present **MORE** - My Official Rewards Experience. This program offers ERSGA retirees discounts and incentives for shopping, travel, entertainment, dining, recreation, and other areas tailored to your interests.

Some facts about the **MORE** offering:

- **MORE** is being offered free of charge – it is free for registered retirees to use and save money.
- **MORE** does not use any ERSGA funds – your retirement funds are not being used to offer **MORE**.
- **MORE** is not a replacement for COLA and/or other offerings from GSRA, etc.
- You can set up Alerts & Favorites in **MORE** to focus only on discounts & incentives you are interested in.

If you have not already registered to take advantage of all **MORE** has to offer, click the **MORE** link on the ERSGA homepage and start saving today!



Online Tools for Retirees

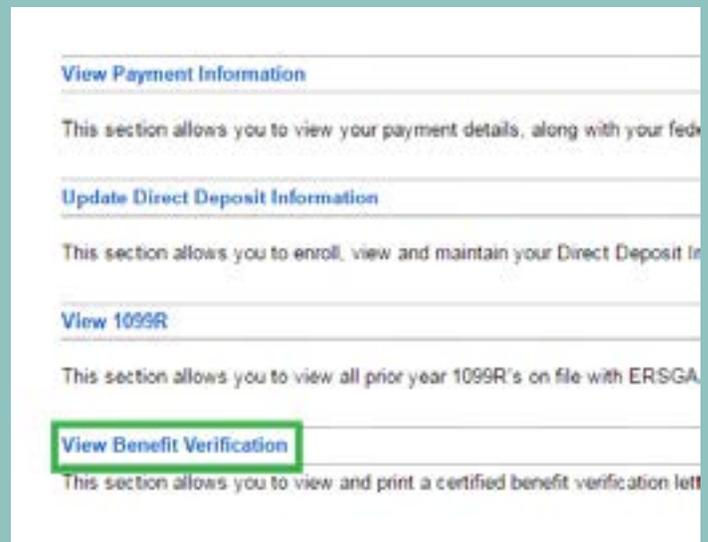
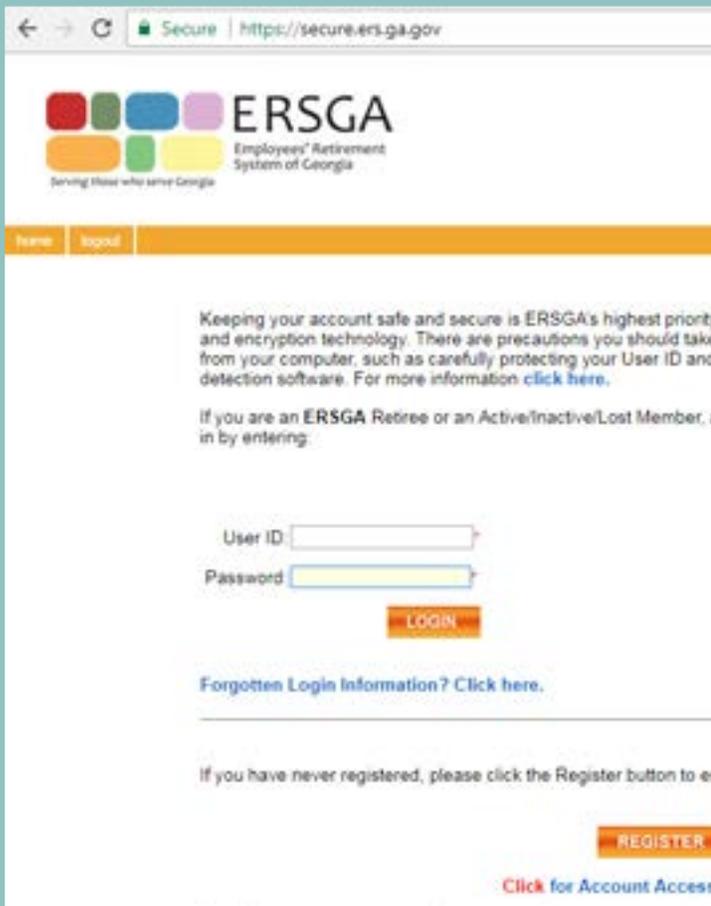
Did you know you can review and manage your monthly pension through our secure self-service website?

On our secure site, <https://secure.ers.ga.gov>, you can:

- View your payment information, including deductions for taxes and insurance
- View your 1099R(s) or 1099-MISC(s) for tax filing
- View and update your tax withholding
- View or change your direct deposit information
- View your beneficiary information, including the pension option you elected at retirement
- Update your personal contact information, including your home address

Benefit Verification Letters

There are times you may be required to provide proof of income for things such as a new credit card or a loan. You can now use our online system at <https://secure.ers.ga.gov> to instantly create a Benefit Verification Letter. Log on to your account using *Account Access* and select *View Benefit Verification* (near the bottom of the page). This will create a PDF you can view or print using Adobe Reader.



People Spotlight - Customer Care Group

Meet the Customer Care Group (CCG) of ERSGA. There are 11 members of the CCG: eight Customer Care Specialists, a Supervisor, a Manager, and a Senior Manager. If you call in with questions about your membership service, retirement eligibility, online registration or distribution options, you will be speaking with a member of CCG.

CCG team members are responsible for ERSGA front line communication. With the Benefits Processing Team, CCG handles all of your inbound/outbound phone calls and email communications. In addition to real time communication, they are responsible for processing some of your correspondence. In FY17, CCG received over 102,000 phone calls and processed over 28,000 letters.

To ensure you receive the best service, new CCG members receive four to six weeks of training before they take their first phone call, and all CCG members participate in ongoing training throughout the year. Their goal is to provide you with helpful, courteous, accessible, responsive, and knowledgeable customer service.

As a result of team work and dedication, CCG met their FY17 quality goal of promoting self-service tools. Online refund requests increased and requests for paper applications to be mailed decreased. So, if we ask you if you have access to your online account, it's our way of getting you what you need faster and easier!



*Front row: LaJene Jones, Carla Magee, Kiara Williams, Angela Sansbury, Sheila Jones
Back row: Woody Martin, Eric Edwards
Not pictured: Sekoya Hicks*

Four Steps to Staying Secure - Personal Data Protection

ERSGA takes the responsibility of protecting your personal data very seriously and have invested heavily in keeping your data secured. Firewalls, encryption, data masking, special software, and several other protocols are employed to guard against any type of breach.

It is important that you also take steps to secure your data and personal information. As technology becomes more important in our lives, it is also increasingly complex. Keeping up with security advice can be confusing. It seems like there is always new guidance on what or what not to do. While the details of how to stay secure may change over time, there are fundamental things you can always do to protect yourself, regardless of what technology you are using.

We recommend the following four key steps to secure your personal information:

1. **You:** Technology alone will never be able to fully protect you. Attackers have learned that the easiest way to bypass even the most advanced security technology is by attacking *you*. If they want your password, credit card, or personal data, the easiest thing for them to do is to trick *you* into giving it to them. For example, someone may call you pretending to be Microsoft tech support and claim that your computer is infected, or you may receive an email saying a package could not be delivered and ask you to click on a link confirming your mailing address. This is how attacks such as Ransomware or CEO Fraud start. The greatest defense against these kinds of attackers is *you*. Be suspicious. By using common sense, you can spot and stop most attacks.
2. **Passwords:** The next step to protecting yourself is using a strong, unique password for each of your devices and online accounts. A *strong* password is one that cannot be easily guessed by hackers or their automated programs. If you're tired of complex, hard to remember passwords, try using a passphrase instead. A passphrase is a series of easy to remember words, such as "Where is my coffee?" The longer your passphrase is, the stronger.

A *unique* password means using a different password for each device and online account, in case one password is compromised. Can't remember all those strong, unique passwords? Use a password manager! A password manager is a specialized application that securely stores all of your passwords in an encrypted format.

Also, one of the most important steps you can take to protect any account is enable two-step verification. Passwords alone are no longer enough to protect accounts. Two-step verification is much stronger. It uses your password, but also adds a second step, like a fingerprint or code sent to your phone. Enable this option on every account you can, including your password manager (if possible). Two-step verification is probably the single most important step you can take to protect yourself, and it's much easier than you think.

3. **Updates:** Make sure your computers, mobile devices, apps, and anything else connected to the Internet are using the latest software versions. Hackers are constantly looking for new vulnerabilities in your software. When they discover vulnerabilities, they use special programs to exploit them and get into your devices. The companies who create the software work hard to fix them by releasing updates. By ensuring you install these updates, you make it much harder for someone to hack you.

You should enable automatic updating whenever possible on any technology connected to a network, including Internet-connected TVs, baby monitors, home routers, gaming consoles, or even your car. If your operating systems or devices are old and no longer supported with security updates, we recommend you replace them.

4. **Backups:** Sometimes, no matter how careful you are, you may be hacked. Often, your only option to ensure your computer or mobile device is free of malware is to fully wipe it and rebuild it from scratch. The attacker might even prevent you from accessing your personal files, photos, and other information stored on the hacked system. In this case, the only way to restore all of your personal information is from a backup.

Make sure you are doing regular backups of any important information and that you can restore from them. Most operating systems and mobile devices support automatic backups. Also, we recommend you store your backups in either the Cloud or offline to protect them against cyber attackers.



Happy
Holidays

Word Scramble Solution

PENSION
ACCOUNT
BENEFICIARY
WITHOLDING
INCOME
PAYMENT