

Employees' Retirement System of Georgia

RETIREE

Newsletter



Tax Reporting

If you received pension payments, a lump sum refund, or a death benefit during calendar year 2013, the payments are reported to the Internal Revenue Service, individual retirees, and beneficiaries on a 1099 (Form 1099R for Qualified Plans and 1099MISC for Non-Qualified Plans).

All 1099s will be mailed on or before January 31, 2014.

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Important Information

Unclaimed Property Search

Do you have a family member or loved one who worked for the state in the past and isn't sure if they have outstanding funds with us? Please let them know that our website will now allow them to search for these outstanding funds. Past members can search for an uncashed check (at least three months old) or an account from a previous period of state employment for which the member left employment before becoming entitled to a monthly pension.

To search for outstanding funds, go to www.ers.ga.gov and click on the Unclaimed Property button.



Retiree Discount Program - Survey

In partnership with the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), ERSGA is considering creating a new discount program for our retirees. The goal of this new program is to provide incentives and discounts tailored to you and your family. We sent out a survey to assess interest from the retirement community, but if you haven't taken the survey, WE NEED YOUR INPUT! To take the survey, please provide your email address to contact@ers.ga.gov.

Thank you for your participation!

Rehired Retiree Reminder

Georgia law restricts retirees of ERS, JRS, and LRS from returning to service for a covered employer for more than 1,040 hours per calendar year.

Exceptions include retirees of LRS returning to the General Assembly and contractors who meet the Independent Contractor exception (as certified by their respective employer) specifications:

- The contracting entity has multiple employees
- The contracting entity has multiple contracts and the contracts are not limited to employers as defined in O.C.G.A. 47-2-1; and
- The contractual relationship with the employer was not created to allow a retired employee to continue employment after retirement in a position similar to the one held before retirement

Please make note of the following:

- It is your responsibility as an employee or contractor to notify your employer that you receive pension benefits
- Failure to notify your employer can result in overpaid pension benefits, for which you will be responsible for repayment
- To meet the Independent Contractor exception, your employer must complete the *verification form* and file it with your retirement plan
- A new *Rehired Retiree* form must be submitted to the retirement plan for each of your employers
- Keep track of your time - 1,040 hours is equivalent to approximately 6 months of full-time work
- Benefits are suspended after 1,040 hours for the remainder of the calendar year
- The 1,040 hours limit resets each calendar year

Peach State Reserves Fund Change

Effective November 12, 2013, the actively-managed real estate securities fund in Peach State Reserves was replaced with a real estate securities index fund. All funds invested in the **Active Real Estate Securities Fund** at market close on November 12th were moved into the new *Real Estate Securities Index Fund* that evening.

New Fund

The *Real Estate Securities Index Fund* is managed by Vanguard. The goal of the fund is to provide a high level of income and moderate long-term growth by tracking the performance of the MSCI US REIT Index, a benchmark index of publicly-traded equity real estate investment trusts (REITs).

Actively Managed vs. Index

Both the outgoing *Active Real Estate Securities Fund* and the new *Real Estate Securities Index Fund* invest in stocks issued by equity REITs, so what is the difference between an actively-managed REIT and a REIT index fund?

Actively-managed funds are run by investment managers who continually buy and sell individual securities, hoping to outperform the overall market.

Index funds are managed *passively*. They seek to track a particular market index that's designed to measure the performance of investments in a certain segment of the market.

Primary Benefit of Index Investing

Unlike managers of active funds, index fund managers don't continually buy and sell stocks in an attempt to outperform the market. Less trading can translate into lower fees and expenses than those incurred by active funds.

For More Information

If you need additional information, access www.GaBreeze.ga.gov or call the GaBreeze Benefits Center toll-free at 1-877-3GBreez (1-877-342-7339). Representatives are available between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

New Health and Dental Rates

2014 Health and Dental Insurance rates will go into effect December 31, 2013 for your January coverage. These changes will impact your December 2013 net benefit amount. Payment advices can be viewed from Retiree Account Access on the [ERSGA website](#) or through your bank account records.



Tax Rate Changes

Every January, the federal income tax tables are updated to reflect new income tax rates. These changes will impact your January payment net amount. Please access your payment advices on either the [ERSGA website](#) or through your bank account. State of Georgia tax rates have not changed for a number of years, and we have not received notification of a change for 2014.

Schedule of 2014 Benefit Payments

Retirement benefits are payable on the last working business day of each month. If you use direct deposit, your benefit payments will be available on the scheduled dates shown below. If you receive benefit payments through the mail, your check will be mailed on the scheduled dates shown below.

January 31, 2014	July 31, 2014
February 28, 2014	August 29, 2014
March 31, 2014	September 30, 2014
April 30, 2014	October 31, 2014
May 30, 2014	November 26, 2014
June 30, 2014	December 31, 2014



Direct Deposit

Direct Deposit is an electronic transfer of your monthly benefit payment from the retirement system to your checking or savings account. Here are some advantages for using direct deposit:

- It's convenient. You'll save valuable time by eliminating trips to your bank.
- It's safe. Your benefit payment will not be left in an unsecured mailbox...it will not be lost, stolen or misplaced.
- It's timely. You can be certain your payment will be in your account the last business day of the month, even when you're out of town or incapacitated.
- It's cost effective. It saves thousands of your retirement fund dollars in printing and mailing costs.
- It's environmentally friendly.

Your pay stubs are available to view online at www.ers.ga.gov.

If you would like to update or receive your benefit payments via Direct Deposit, you may:

- Update your Direct Deposit information by logging on to our [Secure site](#) to make changes.
- Click [here](#) to download an EFT form
- Contact our office at (404) 350-6300 to request an EFT form be mailed to you.



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) 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

Visit www.ers.ga.gov and click on the *Account Access* button to register or log in to your account.

ERSGA
Employees' Retirement System of Georgia
Serving those who serve Georgia

[Home](#) [Logout](#)

Keeping your account safe and secure is ERS GA's highest priority; therefore, this site incorporates internet security and encryption technology. There are precautions you should take to prevent unauthorized access to your account from your computer, such as carefully protecting your User ID and Password, and using firewall and spyware detection software. For more information, [click here](#).

If you are an **ERSGA** Retiree, or an Active/Inactive/Lost Member, and have already established an account, please log in by entering:

User ID

Password

LOGIN

[Forgotten Login Information? Click here.](#)

If you have never registered, please click the Register button to establish your ERS GA account.

REGISTER

[Click for Account Access Instructions](#)

Should you encounter any problems accessing your account, please call ERS GA and report the difficulty. Questions about your account should be directed to an ERS GA Customer Service Representative at (404) 350-6300 or (800) 805-4609. You can also [email us](#) with feedback or suggestions. Thank you for your continued support.

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Tips and Useful Information

Staying Safe Online

While the internet is a great place to do research, read about current events, or catch up with friends, it also comes with risks. It's important to protect yourself from criminals who try to steal your personal information or identity, or generally cause problems for you. Whether it's browsing the web or checking your email, there are a number of ways to stay safe.

Surviving Web Surfing

When surfing websites in your favorite browser (e.g., Internet Explorer, Google Chrome) pay attention to the address bar (the little line at the top of the page with address of the website you're visiting). Make sure you're actually on the site you intended to visit. Often 'bad guys' will set up sites that look like the actual site, but are fake – designed to get you to enter personal information, or click a link that installs malicious software.

Phishing

One of the most common methods criminals use to trick you into providing information is a technique called phishing. This is where the criminal creates an email that looks as though it came from your bank or some other well-known website, such as PayPal or Amazon, suggesting there is a problem with your account or a purchase you've made. The email requests you to click a link to log in to correct the problem. Even though you may be anxious to investigate because it involves your banking account or a purchase you didn't make, take your time and review the email carefully. Use the "hover" method to check the link in the email actually goes where it says it does by:

- maneuvering your pointer over the link (DON'T click!), "hovering" over the link
- a small pop-up will appear, showing you the actual location of the link (it's usually not where you expect it to go)

Your best option is to type in the address of your bank or other site and log in manually in a web browser. If there really is an issue with your account, you'll likely be notified once you log in. Again, DO NOT click the link in the email. Also, you can always call your bank if you have questions.

Email Safety

Staying safe with email is pretty simple. Most importantly, DO NOT open attachments from people you don't know. Almost no one will send you a .zip file attachment, especially people you don't know.

Criminals will also play to your curiosity. They may send you messages suggesting you have a UPS or FedEx package, or that you've won something. Another commonly used technique is to imply they have a picture of you, with a note like "I can't believe this picture of you". Never open any attachment from a person you don't know. It's almost 100% guaranteed to be a virus causing you a lot of headaches. Just don't do it!

Like with old food in the fridge "when in doubt, throw it out." If it doesn't seem right, don't open it, don't click the link – but keep in mind that just because you got a suspicious email, doesn't mean you have a virus. If you have deleted the email without opening any attachments, chances are you're fine and can just continue with your work.

Stay safe out there!



RETIREE Newsletter

Read a New Book a Month...and Other Ways to Stay Sharp

December is Read A New Book month, so now is the perfect time for you to find something new to read. And don't be afraid to step outside your reading boundaries – you never know what you might discover out there!

When you're finished with your book, you can donate it to a library or charity and help others expand their horizons, too!

Don't know what to read? [PBS](#) has some suggestions.

Play Games to Beat Brain Fog

Regularly challenging yourself with mental exercises and new activities keeps your mind running on all four cylinders.

In fact, adults who frequently engage in mentally stimulating activities are 63% less likely to develop dementia than those who rarely do such activities, a *New England Journal of Medicine* study discovered. A University of Michigan study found that adults who play a mentally challenging game every day for several weeks can dramatically improve their memory.

For more info and some brain games, click [here](#) to go to Prevention.

Your Body and Your Brain

Don't forget that diet, exercise, and adequate sleep are also important for keeping your brain in tip-top shape!



Important Contacts Around the State

Department of Community Health (DCH) – Issues with health insurance premium or coverage

- <http://dch.georgia.gov/>

Georgia Breeze – Dental Coverage and Peach State Reserves

- <http://gabreeze.ga.gov/>

Georgia United Credit Union – Savings (Direct Deposit Available – Contact GUCU)

- <https://georgiaunitedcu.org/>

Atlanta Postal Credit Union – Savings (Direct Deposit Available – Contact APCU)

- <https://www.apcu.com/site/HSECU.html>