

At Your Service

Orange County Employees Retirement System

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 3 MAGAZINE FOR ALL MEMBERS SEPTEMBER 2003

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as S - P - D**

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At Your Service



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At Your Service is published for members and retirees of the Orange County Employees Retirement System.

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At Your Service is written and designed by Robert Kinsler, Jayne Ritchey and Cuong Nguyen.

Board of Retirement Meetings:
All regular business meetings are held in OCERS Board Room at 8:30 a.m.

September 15, 2003
October 27, 2003
November 17, 2003
December 15, 2003

Summary Plan Description updated for OCERS members

OCERS has updated the official Summary Plan Description (SPD) for General and Safety Members and posted each of the documents online at www.ocers.org. The information in the SPD is intended to provide a summary of the retirement, disability, death and survivor benefits available to members and their eligible beneficiaries.

The SPD covers a number of essential areas such as membership, how your retirement is calculated, reciprocity, how to purchase service credit, taxes on benefits and the types of benefit options available to members.



The County Employees' Retirement Law of 1937 ('37 Act), which governs OCERS retirement benefits, is complex and detailed. As a result of the complexity of the 340-page '37 Act, OCERS has made an effort to provide you with a reader-friendly guide to your retirement benefits.

However, if there is a conflict between the information provided in the SPD and the law, the law shall prevail. Nothing provided in the SPD should be considered a legally binding interpretation, enlargement, or amendment of the provisions that are contained in the '37 Act, bylaws of the Board of Retirement, or resolutions that have been adopted by the Board of Retirement and/or Board of Supervisors.

For more information, visit OCERS' Web site at www.ocers.org or call OCERS toll-free at (888) 570-6277.

OCERS Web site should be your first stop online

Going online? Then log on to www.ocers.org to learn more about retirement, disability, death and survivor benefits offered by OCERS to members. OCERS' official Web site provides a wealth of information and services for anyone with access to the World Wide Web. One of the most popular features at OCERS' site is the Benefits Calculator, which allows any member to get a fast estimate of their projected retirement allowance based on their current salary, age and years of service. No registration is required and it only takes a few seconds to complete the easy-to-use form.



In addition, members can now register to take any of a variety of free seminars offered by OCERS through the Web site. Other features at www.ocers.org include the monthly online newsletter OCERS Extra, a printable version of OCERS' official Power of Attorney form for those who want to designate someone to look after their retirement account if they become unable to look after their own needs, as well as a Beneficiary Change form.

Retiree Death Benefit to be reduced

OCERS will now pay a one-time \$750 lump-sum death benefit to a designated beneficiary at the time of a retired member's death. The death benefit has been \$1,000 for a number of years. \$750 of that amount is part of the basic benefit structure and \$250 has been paid, as provided by law, from "excess earnings" on investments. Given the adverse markets experienced by OCERS and other pension plans around the nation in the past several years, there are currently no excess earnings from which to pay the additional amount. If OCERS again reports surplus earnings, the Board of Retirement would have the ability to again increase the benefit to \$1,000.

"This change has absolutely no effect on the level of monthly retirement benefits offered by OCERS," said Keith Bozarth, Chief Executive Officer. "When a member dies after retirement, the spouse, children or designated beneficiaries will be paid according to the provisions of the payment option selected at retirement." Beneficiaries of active and deferred members with 10 or more years of service will continue to receive a one-time \$750 death benefit when a member dies. This amount represents no change for that group of members.

Financial Strategy Seminars help prepare for future

If you are planning to retire within the next 3 to 30 years, you should plan to attend one of the following Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminars held at:

**OCERS (Training Room)
2223 E. Wellington Avenue
Santa Ana, CA 92701**

The Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminar consists of a three-session workshop. Each meeting will cover important topics for successful planning; individuals and couples are welcome to attend. The third meeting concentrates on information from an OCERS Retirement Program Specialist.

The seminar is free and there is plenty of free on-site parking for those attending. Various topics of interest and importance will be covered over the course of the three-session workshop.

Among the important topics covered in the comprehensive three-session workshop:

- Deferred Compensation investment choices
- Tax-free and low-cost investing for profit
- How to determine retirement goals
- Investment choices to consider in the current stock market

The third meeting of each workshop focuses on information relating to OCERS, including such topics as:

- Eligibility for Retirement
- Reciprocal Benefits
- Benefit Calculations, and how to apply for your retirement benefits from OCERS

Don't miss out on this valuable information. It will help you prepare for your future. The seminars are free, but reservations are required. To make your reservation to attend this seminar, please log on at www.ocers.org and click on "Retirement Seminars."

An important note: anyone registering for the Financial Strategy Seminar should plan on attending all three sessions. For more information on upcoming Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminars, please call Catie Moore at Financial Management Specialists, (714) 704-6502.

SCHEDULED DATES:

The Financial Strategy Seminar is a three-session workshop, and persons signing up should plan on attending all three sessions of the Workshop.

Dates are as follows:

Workshop

Wednesdays

October 1, 8, and 15, 2003

6-9:30 p.m.

Workshop

Wednesdays

November 5, 12, and 19, 2003

6-9:30 p.m.

Workshop

Wednesdays

January 7, 14, and 21, 2004

6-9:30 p.m.

OCERS offers Pre-Retirement Planning Seminars

When it comes to retirement planning, it's never too early – or too late – to get started. So no matter when you plan to retire, it's important to attend a Pre-Retirement Planning Seminar offered by OCERS.

The few hours you spend at the seminar can have beneficial and long-lasting impacts on your quality of life after you retire.

The Pre-Retirement Planning Seminar is held twice a month at OCERS, 2223 E. Wellington Ave., Santa Ana, and includes a presentation by an OCERS Retirement Program Specialist.

The one-session, five-hour seminar is free and there is plenty of free on-site parking for those attending.

Various topics of interest and importance to you will be covered. A representative from "Deferred Compensation" will be addressing options for withdrawing funds from your 457 plan; a Social Security representative will discuss your Social Security benefits; a representative from Retiree Medical will discuss medical benefit options; and an OCERS Retirement Specialist will focus on your OCERS retirement plan. Among the topics covered by the OCERS representative:

- When you are eligible for retirement
- How to determine your future monthly compensation
- How to determine compensation for your beneficiaries
- When should new retirees expect their first retirement check
- Reciprocal benefits for employees who have worked for two or more retirement systems
- How to schedule an appointment with an OCERS Retirement Program Specialist

Don't miss out on this valuable information. It will help you prepare for your future. The seminars are free, but reservations are required. For more information and to make your reservation to attend this seminar, please log on at www.ocers.org and click on "Retirement Seminars."

SCHEDULED DATES:

These one-session seminars will be held from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Dates are as follows:

September 17, 2003

October 1, 2003

October 15, 2003

November 5, 2003

November 19, 2003

January 7, 2004

January 21, 2004

County of Orange 2004 Open Enrollment for retirees coming

Attention all eligible retirees who are currently enrolled in a County of Orange retiree health plan, Open Enrollment is right around the corner. If you have experienced a recent address change, please make sure you notify the County of Orange Benefits Center by calling the Benefits Resources Line toll-free at (866) 325-2345. This will ensure you receive all the important information that will be sent to you soon by providing your correct address to the Benefits Center.

Also, please attend a 2004 Retiree Open Enrollment Presentation for more information on your options. Dates and times will be included in your open enrollment package sent to your home address.

Ready to retire? OCERS will be there

In the July 19, 2003 edition of the nation's largest-circulation daily newspaper, it was reported that more than one-third of adults "have no money saved in any kind of retirement account," according to a USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll.

In addition, the poll revealed a large number of workers don't have access to a pension or retirement savings plan.

The good news for OCERS members is that once you retire, you will receive a monthly allowance for life that is based on the formula adopted by your agency, your age at the time of retirement, average monthly earnings and years of eligible service.



For more than 55 years, OCERS has been providing retirement, disability, death and survivor benefits to employees of the County and certain other districts known as "Plan Sponsors."

OCERS provides a reliable source of retirement income that together with your savings, any additional pensions and Social Security, as well as other investments (such as a deferred compensation plan) can help prepare you for retirement.

While newspapers have been covering the nation's volatile economy and stock market over the past several years, OCERS members can be secure in the knowledge that they are guaranteed to receive the retirement benefit they have earned. State law requires an annual audit of OCERS' financial statements. See "2002 Financial Reports" story on page 7 of this issue for more information.

Among the things members may want to do:

- Attend a free Financial Strategy Seminar at OCERS (see page 4)
- Certain members have the ability to purchase Service Credit that will enhance their retirement allowance. Contact Member Services and ask for the form, "Request to Purchase Service Credit" if you think you have previously-withdrawn OCERS service or other service you believe might be available for buyback

Remember, the sooner you plan for the future, the better equipped you and your beneficiaries will be when it comes time to retire.

For more information visit OCERS Web site at www.ocers.org.

'Divorce and Your Retirement' Seminar dates now open

The Legal Division at OCERS is offering a special one-session “**Divorce and Your Retirement**” seminar on how divorce may impact your retirement benefits. It will be held on the following dates and times:

- **Thursday, October 16, 2003; 8 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.**
- **Thursday, December 4, 2003; 8 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.**

The seminar focuses on how OCERS handles divorce materials and what types of court orders comply with the retirement plan. The OCERS legal staff cannot offer legal advice on your specific rights under California community property laws.

The seminar is free and open to all active members, retirees and deferred members. The seminar will be held at OCERS, 2223 Wellington Ave., Santa Ana. The presentation is approximately one hour, followed by a 30-minute question and answer period.

Space is limited and reservations are required. To reserve a space, please contact Fred Messerer at (714) 569-4894.



2002 Financial Reports now available

The 2002 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) of the Orange County Employees Retirement System is now available. In addition, OCERS has copies of the Summary of the Financial Report available as a colorful brochure.



Stop by and get your personal copy of either publication, or e-mail Debbie Villa and we can mail or pony you one.

The year 2002 marked OCERS' 58th year of operation. Information in the CAFR is designed to provide a complete and accurate review of last year's operations. It contains information about the Retirement System's investments, financial statements, contribution rates, funding and membership.



“This financial report is designed to provide the Board of Retirement, members, beneficiaries, taxpayers, and participating employers with a general overview of OCERS' financial condition,” said Toi Dang, Chief Financial Officer of OCERS.

To view the CAFR online, visit OCERS' official Web site at www.ocers.org.

Official documents assist to build bridge to retirement

A certified copy of your birth certificate plays an important role for OCERS members in preparing for the transition into retirement.

As a way to help protect the identity of a member and their financial future, a birth certificate is the easiest way to document the identity and date of birth of an OCERS member. At the time you apply for retirement, you must provide a certified copy of your birth certificate.

If you don't have a copy of your birth certificate, one of the following may be acceptable, depending on your situation:

- Census Bureau Registration of Birth
- Hospital birth record or certificate
- Physician or Midwife birth record
- Naturalization and/or Immigration documents
- DD214 (Military Discharge)
- Valid Passport
- School records
- Life insurance policy
- Marriage records



If you are married, you must also supply a certified copy of your spouse's birth certificate (or one of the documents listed above), your marriage certificate, and your spouse's Social Security number.

If you were divorced while an OCERS member, we will also need your Divorce Decree and Marital Settlement Agreement. For more details on preparing for retirement, visit www.ocers.org or call OCERS at (714) 558-6200.

Orange County Employees Retirement System
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