

At Your Service

Orange County Employees Retirement System

Volume 10 Number 3 Magazine for all Members July 2011

Lights
Camera
OCERS!



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
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Board of Retirement Meetings:

All regular business meetings are held in OCERS Board Room at 9:00 a.m.

January 18, 2011	February 14, 2011
March 21, 2011	April 18, 2011
May 17, 2011	June 20, 2011
July 18, 2011	August 22, 2011
October 17, 2011	November 21, 2011
	December 19, 2011

County of Orange retirees health benefits

The Annual County of Orange Benefits Open Enrollment period for retirees will be from November 1 through November 23, 2011.

You will be sent detailed information before Open Enrollment from the County and Benefits Center to your mailing address. Please make sure if you do experience a change in address you report that change directly to the Benefits Center, OCERS and any other organization you are affiliated with. We strongly encourage you to thoroughly review all materials to ensure you are informed in order to make the best decision regarding health plan choices for you and your family for 2012.



During Open Enrollment, the County of Orange and the Benefits Center are ready to support and assist you with questions and concerns. There will be a series of Open Enrollment meetings throughout the month of November. These meetings will provide an overview of upcoming changes with the opportunity to ask questions of each of the health plan representatives. Be sure to check your mailbox and read all Open Enrollment materials carefully. For information about your current benefits, or to verify the Benefits Center has your current mailing address, please call the Benefits Resource Line toll-free at 1-866-325-2345.

Lights, Camera, OCERS! Video Library now online

For members seeking information on a wide range of subjects, there is now a Video Library on OCERS' Web site featuring short videos covering reciprocity, retirement benefit options, the COLA (Cost-of-Living Adjustment) and other topics relating to member benefits.

The Video Library was launched in May 2011, partly in response to ongoing requests and feedback received at Focus Groups from active and retired members asking when OCERS might begin providing information through the use of easy-to-view videos.

"Our posting of educational videos is one of many ways we can help members and their loved ones prepare for retirement," said Julie Wyne, Assistant Chief Executive Officer/External Operations.

For those who are hearing impaired or who don't have the ability to listen to their computer's audio system in the workplace, the majority of videos also feature closed captioning. The videos are produced in-house, with OCERS' own knowledgeable staff featured in the clips.

"With the popularity of YouTube and other social media sites, many computer users want the ability to get essential information via video," Wyne explained.

"With so many technological tools now available, our in-house staff is able to use a high-definition video camera and sophisticated editing equipment to shoot and post videos as part of OCERS' customer service-related efforts," Wyne noted.

One of the key roles is that the videos will likely form an educational bridge for members just beginning to think about retirement. Active and deferred members who have viewed the videos will undoubtedly have a better understanding of retirement, death and survivor benefits when they attend a seminar or come in for their retirement appointment.

Retired members will also have a reason to view many of the videos, including those focusing on the COLA (which also addresses the "COLA Bank"). OCERS will continue to produce and post new videos in the future. *Computer users must have access to YouTube to view these videos; if you are blocked from viewing the videos at work, you should be able to view the videos at home.*

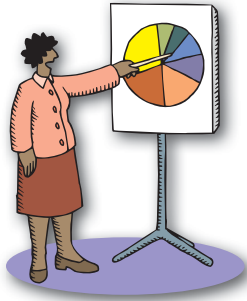
To get to the Video Library, visit OCERS' Web site at www.ocers.org and click on Video Library located inside the Quick Links box.



Financial Seminar helps members prepare for future

A widely-circulated article published in the Wall Street Journal in June 2011 reveals “the financial status of American households may be even darker than we thought.”

The article (“Most Americans Haven’t Planned for Retirement and Other Areas of Concern”) uses recent data from the federal government and deciphers a comprehensive report penned by a professor at the George Washington School of Business to provide a clear picture of how a growing number of Americans may not be prepared for retirement.



One key finding chronicled in the article is that when respondents were given a basic list of questions on finance and economics in everyday life, fewer than 10 percent were able to answer all questions correctly.

OCERS members wishing to position themselves in that elite group of those in the know should plan to attend a free Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminar. Financial Strategies Seminars are held at:

**OCERS (Training Room)
2223 E. Wellington Avenue, Suite 100
Santa Ana, CA 92701-3161**

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

Various topics of interest and importance will be covered over the course of the three-session workshop. Some of them are:

- Tax-free and low-cost investing for profit
- How to determine retirement goals
- Investment choices in today’s market

The three-session workshop 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.” For more information on upcoming Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminars, please call Robert Kinsler at (714) 558-6230.

SCHEDULED DATES for three-session workshop:

Workshop
Wednesdays
July 13, 20 and 27, 2011
6 – 9:30 p.m.

Workshop
Wednesdays
September 7, 14 and 21, 2011
6 – 9:30 p.m.

Workshop
Wednesdays
October 5, 12 and 19, 2011
6 – 9:30 p.m.



Thinking of retirement? Attend a daytime seminar

OCERS members who attend a daytime Pre-Retirement Seminar have a better understanding of how the retirement system works and are more confident in the decision making process. Anyone who is within three years of their retirement date should plan on taking this seminar.

These daytime seminars are held at OCERS, 2223 E. Wellington Ave., Suite 100, Santa Ana, from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The one-session seminar is free, and there is plenty of free on-site parking for those attending. Various topics are covered. A Social Security representative will discuss Social Security and Medicare benefits; a representative from “Deferred Compensation” will discuss the County’s 457 plan; a representative from Retiree Medical will discuss the County’s retiree medical benefit options; and an OCERS Retirement Specialist will focus on your OCERS retirement benefits. **Seminar Dates: July 6 and July 20; Aug. 3 and 17; Sept. 7 and 21, 2011.**



Here is the itinerary for the Pre-Retirement Seminar:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. | “Social Security/Medicare” |
| 9:30 a.m. to 9:40 a.m. | Morning Break |
| 9:40 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. | “Retired Employees Association of Orange County (REAOC)” |
| 9:45 a.m. to 11 a.m. | “OCERS Benefits” |
| 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. | Lunch Break |
| 12:15 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. | “County of Orange Deferred Contribution Program” |
| 12:45 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. | “County of Orange Retiree Medical” |

Please note that all presentation times are subject to change without notice.

No registration is necessary to attend the Pre-Retirement Seminars. OCERS members are welcome to take this seminar as often as they like. OCERS also permits members to take part of the seminar one day and come back to finish it later when their schedule allows.

We also recommend that attendees bring something to eat, or plan on driving/walking to a nearby eatery during the 75-minute lunch break since food is not provided and there is no cafeteria on-site.

For more information about all of OCERS’ seminars, please log on at www.ocers.org and click on “Retirement Seminars.”

OCERS' Web site offers wealth of resources online

OCERS members are increasingly logging on at www.ocers.org to learn more about their retirement benefits. OCERS' official Web site provides a wealth of information and services for anyone connected to the Internet.



For active and deferred members, one of the most popular features is the Benefits Calculator, which allows any member to get a fast estimate of their projected retirement allowance based on their current Final Average Salary, Plan Type, age and years of service credit. No registration is required and it only takes a few seconds to complete the easy-to-use online form. Indeed, the Benefits Calculator is a financial planning tool that provides an immediate and personalized estimate of their OCERS retirement benefits at any eligible age.

Active and deferred members can use the Member Information Center ("MIC") to complete a Retirement Application online, while retired members are able to view screens detailing tax withholding, direct deposit and 1099-R information (if you have trouble using the MIC, please call OCERS at 714-558-6200).

While members are at OCERS' Web site, they can learn more about retirement, disability, death and survivor benefits utilizing easy-to-use links directing them to various areas of the site.

All members are free to use OCERS' "Live Chat." This is a unique feature where computer users can chat online with OCERS Retirement Specialists in real time during regular business hours.

For more information, visit www.ocers.org.

Death and survivor benefits bring peace of mind

The bond OCERS builds with each member is personal, beginning when a member is working for one of OCERS' participating employers and continues after they retire. Ultimately, that relationship often carries on after the member is gone, through survivor benefits.

Upon the death of a member, his or her eligible survivors and beneficiaries are entitled to certain benefits. That is why it is so important for members to keep their beneficiaries up-to-date (*see article on page 7 for more information on beneficiary designations*).

Call (714) 558-6200 as soon as possible to notify OCERS of a member's death. Upon notification of the member's death, OCERS will research the case to determine any applicable benefits and beneficiaries.

Are your beneficiary designations updated?

Although one of the benefits of being a member of OCERS is survivor benefits, many long-time members forget to keep the retirement system updated in the wake of important events that can impact their beneficiary designations.

Life events such as marriage, divorce, the birth of a child or loss of a loved one may all impact who a member selects as their primary and alternate beneficiaries.

With active, deferred and retired members able to view and update their beneficiaries using the online Member Information Center (MIC), now is the perfect time to ensure that your beneficiary designations are up-to-date. This is especially important since the most recent beneficiary designation on file at the OCERS office is used to distribute death and survivor benefits.

A designated beneficiary can be a spouse/registered domestic partner, eligible children, or any other person selected by the member. However, in most cases, the rights of any surviving spouse/registered domestic partner or eligible children will be superior to the rights of any other beneficiary.

Here are some easy ways to update your beneficiary designation or confirm the designation that OCERS has on file. Log onto the MIC and review your designations. If changes are necessary simply click on the “Change Beneficiary” button and submit your changes online.

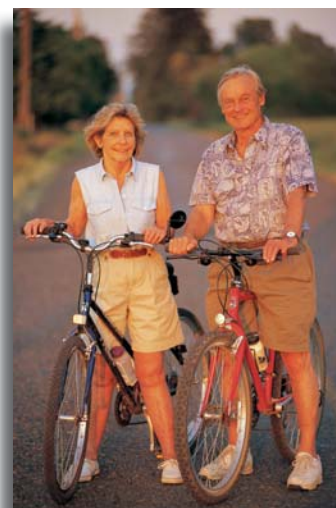
You can also print out a “Beneficiary Change Form” by visiting OCERS Web site at www.ocers.org. Once you have completed and signed your form return it to OCERS’ office so that we can update your file.

If you do not have access to a computer and printer, you can call OCERS’ office at 714-558-6200 and ask that a “Beneficiary Change Form” be mailed to you. You must complete and sign the form before returning it to OCERS.

For more information, visit www.ocers.org or call OCERS at 714-558-6200.

Listing a trust as beneficiary? What you need to know

OCERS is not allowed to pay a continuance to a trust (Cal.Gov.C. §§31760.1 – 31764, 31780). For a continuation payment, your beneficiary must be a living person. You may designate a trust or an individual as a beneficiary for lump sum disbursements. If no person or trust is designated as beneficiary, the lump sum disbursement will be made to your estate.





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OCERS and public pensions at a glance: facts count

OCERS members are increasingly mindful of the ongoing debate over public employee pensions, especially when so many media reports don't provide complete or accurate information about the role of investment gains and member contributions in the funding of benefits. In this article, OCERS is presenting some key information that answers many of the questions asked by active and retired members, as well as employers.

Public pensions are funded through three sources - investment income, employee contributions and employer contributions. Historically, for every dollar paid in pension benefits, the majority has come from investment gains in OCERS' portfolio. Indeed, looking at the period of 1995-2009, approximately 70 percent of benefits were paid by investment earnings and employee contributions.

OCERS assets are growing and the system's investments are doing well. As of March 31, 2011, OCERS' investment portfolio was more than \$9.1 billion. OCERS' portfolio recorded a return of more than 20 percent from March 8, 2009 (the date that marked the bottom of the Great Recession) to March 31, 2011. The fund earned a 12.78 percent return on investments for the one-year period ended March 31, 2011.

As of Dec. 31, 2010, the average monthly benefit for OCERS' general members and other payees was \$2,621, or about \$31,452 annually. For all safety member retirees and payees, their monthly average benefit was \$5,141, or about \$61,692 annually.

For more information, visit www.ocers.org.