

Connections

An Office of Retirement Services Publication

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Our Mission

Partners in achieving excellence.

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Your information is safe at ORS

The Federal Trade Commission estimates as many as nine million Americans have their identities stolen each year. Identity thieves trick people into giving out personal information like names, social security numbers, and credit card numbers through the mail, over the phone, and by email. These criminals fraudulently use the information, causing serious problems for innocent people.

At ORS, we protect your personal information. We only disclose information about your account to you or your legal representative

such as your guardian or power of attorney, and only when documentation is on file. We handle records and files with care, and access

When communicating with ORS through email, it's best to use only the last four digits of your social security number.

is only given internally to those who need it.

We encourage you to take proper precautions for guarding yourself from identity theft. The

State of Michigan's Attorney General website, www.michigan.gov/ag, offers great tips for protecting your personal information from predators. A wealth of information can also be found on the Federal Trade Commission's website, www.ftc.gov.

Tax information you should know

Pension taxability. While your pension is subject to federal income tax, it is exempt from Michigan and local income taxes. If you live outside of Michigan, check the state and local tax regulations in your area.

Tax withholding. If you wish to change the amount withheld from your pension for Federal taxes, send us a *Federal Income Tax Withholding Authorization (R0012X)* form. The form is available under Forms and Publications at www.michigan.gov/ors, or you can call (800) 381-5111, or 322-5103 in the Lansing area, to have one mailed to you.

Tax tip for public safety officers. A new federal tax provision which took effect January 1, 2007, may apply to some public safety officers. Section 845 of the Federal Pension Protection Act of 2006 allows eligible retired public safety officers to deduct up to \$3,000 in retiree and dependent health insurance premiums from their federal taxable income. Refer to the IRS website at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-07-07.pdf for more details.

If you believe you might be eligible for this deduction, consult your tax advisor. *Note:* ORS and its employees do not give tax or legal advice. You should seek advice based on your particular circumstances from an independent tax advisor.

From the Director



I recently watched a news report about how our nation is becoming more and more dependent on technology. Our cars talk to us, our TVs require programmers, and even our wrist watches come with a 25-page instruction manual. New technology is all around us, and we need to keep up!

At your Office of Retirement Services, we are working to provide tools to help you understand your retirement plan and when you should contact us. We regularly update our publications with an eye on ease of use. We update our website often with our customers' needs at the forefront.

In fact, if you haven't visited your ORS website recently, take a look at www.michigan.gov/ors. You will see my welcome message and more information that is pertinent to you. By clicking on your retirement system's link, you will find answers to your questions.



Do you want to know more about the financial health of your retirement system?

Click on the *Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR)* button with the picture of Ben Franklin.

How about previous issues of this newsletter? You can view them all the way back to March of 1998.



Do you need to change your address or direct deposit? These forms and several others you may need for corresponding with ORS can be downloaded from the Forms and Publications link on our website.

If you need our address, phone, or fax number, simply click Contact ORS at the top of every page. It's all there!

We hope you find these tools useful and easy to use. Please keep watching our website because we plan to keep adding features that will be valuable to our customers.

Our website is a great source of information, but the folks in our Customer Service Center are also here to serve you. If you can't find what you need on our website, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Phil Stoddard, Director
Office of Retirement Services

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Tracking your assets

As ORS Director Phil Stoddard pointed out in his message on page two, technology continues to make life easier for many of us. Chirping key chains help us find lost keys, a simple phone call can unlock our car doors, and a GPS (global positioning system) can give us instant turn-by-turn directions to a destination. But could you or your heirs as easily find the way to your assets and important information?

In this electronic age, it is especially important to keep clear, up-to-date records of your income, assets, insurances, will, and other personal records and openly communicate them with your heirs. In the event of your death, they can easily take care of business, follow your wishes, and not overlook any assets.

Experts suggest creating an ATD (assets tracking document) for locating your personal information. It should include key contact information (lawyer, accountant, ORS, etc.) as well as where to find your assets, records, documents, and computer access information. Keep the paper file in a secure location and share it with the people you trust.

To help get you started, we've created an ATD for you to use. Download a copy at www.michigan.gov/orsatd.

Assets Tracking Document													
Who are my important contacts?													
Retirement / Pension Systems:													
Lawyer / Executor:													
Accountant:													
Insurance Agents:													
Financial Planner / Stock Broker:													
Funeral Arrangements:													
Other:													
Where are my records and documents stored?													
A	Residence / Home safe (Combination / Key Location):												
B	Safety Deposit Box (Bank / Key):												
C	Personal Computer (Login / Password):												
D	Internet (List of URLs, logins, passwords):												
E	Other:												
Basic Documents		A	B	C	D	E		A	B	C	D	E	
	Birth Certificate							Auto / Vehicle Titles and Records					
	Citizenship Papers							Health Insurance Information					
	Marriage Certificate							Property Titles / Deeds					
	Children's Birth Certificates							Car Insurance Policy					
	Guardianship Papers							Homeowner's Policy					
	Divorce / Separation Papers							Mortgage / Loan Information					
	Power of Attorney							Rental Property Records					
	Trust Agreements (Original)							Income Tax Returns					
	Military Discharge Papers							Other:					
Will (Original)							Other:						
Assets								Deferred Compensation / IRA Accounts					
	Retirement Plans							Life Insurance Policies					
	Annuity Contracts							Record of Investment Securities					
	Brokerage Account Records							Mutual Funds / Bonds					
	Stock Certificates / Plans							Other Securities					
	Certificates of Deposit							Other:					
Checking and Savings Accounts							Other:						
Credit Card Information							Other:						
Date Prepared _____ Copies Given to _____													

Do you have unclaimed assets?



If you have old savings or retirement accounts, or other types of assets that you may have forgotten about, there is a way you can reclaim those assets. The state of Michigan's Department of Treasury has a division that assumes custody of unclaimed property (not including real estate), and returns that property to rightful owners or heirs in accordance with the Michigan Uniform Unclaimed Property Act.

Unclaimed property is turned over to the state after there has not been activity in the account for a specific period of time – usually five years – and attempts to contact the owner were unsuccessful.

The account is held by the state until the owner or the owner's heir is located and the funds are claimed.

If you think you or someone you know might have unclaimed property, you can call or write the Unclaimed Property Division of the Michigan Department of Treasury, or you can search by name at the Department of Treasury's website – www.michigan.gov/treasury – by navigating to the Unclaimed Property button.

Ask an Expert

ORS experts answer frequently asked questions



Q: Before I leave on vacation, I want to give my son power of attorney rights. Do you have any advice?

A: Many people have a POA naming someone to take care of affairs if they cannot. Make your decisions cautiously and be sure you understand the different types of POAs. Some allow power to make medical or financial decisions, and others only give access to medical or financial information.

Q: I am my father's power of attorney. Why wouldn't ORS answer my questions when I called?

A: Before we can answer any questions specific to an account, a copy of the POA document must be on file with ORS.

Q: Although I have power of attorney for my parents, I am not allowed to change where their pension checks are direct deposited. Why?

A: Not all POA documents allow the same power or access to information. Find out what types of information the POA document gives access to and what it gives you power to do.

Q: Do I need to send a copy of the POA document every time I need to change something on my mom's account?

A: No. The POA document only needs to be sent in once, unless the POA changes. We'll keep the copy in the member's file.

WHEN TO CONTACT ORS

Not sure what needs to be reported? Here we list the most common situations that would require contact with ORS. Please use it as a general guide only. Because we can't list every possible event that should be reported, it's best to contact us if you're unsure.

Address Change. Be sure ORS knows your current mailing address at all times so you receive your statements and other important notices.

Death. ORS should be immediately notified upon the death of a pension recipient; a pension beneficiary; or anyone enrolled in your health, dental, or vision insurances.

Divorce. Notify ORS immediately if your ex-spouse is enrolled in your insurances. And, if you elected a survivor option with your ex-spouse as beneficiary, it's best to contact us before your divorce because we can only change your pension if ordered by the court.

EFT Change. Notify us if you want to sign up for electronic funds transfer (EFT) or change your EFT bank account. Be sure to keep your old account open until your pension payment is deposited to the new account.

Marriage. Notify ORS within 30 days whenever an insurance dependent marries, or if you wish to enroll your new spouse in your insurances.

Medicare. Any person enrolled in your health insurances must sign up for Medicare Parts A & B when first eligible. Send ORS a copy of the Medicare card if this happens before age 65 or if you are a retired state trooper.

Details about reporting these and other life events, as well as forms you'll need, can be found online or by contacting ORS.

Pension Due Dates

Pension payments are issued on the 25th of the month. If the 25th falls on a weekend or holiday, your pension will be paid the previous business day.

If your EFT is not credited within three days after that date, please call ORS. If your check is delayed, we can reissue it after the seventh of the following month.

Holidays

ORS offices will be closed on the dates listed below.

November 12 - Veterans Day

November 22 & 23 - Thanksgiving

December 24 & 25 - Christmas

December 31 & January 1 - New Year's Holiday

January 21 - Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

February 18 - President's Day