



Pension Division Newsletter

-
- *Training Survey and Webinars*
 - *Working Group Update*
 - *Municipal Ratification of Benefit Levels*
 - *Meet Your Pension Analyst*
 - *2009 Reporting-Year Forms*
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Training Survey and Webinars

The Office of the State Auditor is planning a number of online training sessions (webinars) during 2010. The webinars will be shorter than traditional classroom-style classes and can be viewed in the convenience of your own home, office, or fire hall. Webinars will eliminate travel time and costs while still providing targeted training for relief association trustees. Each webinar will focus on a specific topic such as reporting forms, legislative updates, or investment issues. We will also be able to tailor the trainings based on the level of knowledge and experience with the topic. Finally, if you are not able to join one of our live online trainings, the webinars will be recorded and available for viewing on our website at your convenience.

To help us prepare for the webinar sessions, we are conducting a survey to determine the level of interest in different topics. Please take a few moments to complete our survey by clicking on the link below. You will not be asked to enter any personal contact information, and the feedback that you provide will help us ensure that our training sessions are tailored to meet your needs. Thank you!

<http://www.surveymk.com/s/QCGVJTG>

Working Group Update

The Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement heard the 2009-2010 Volunteer Fire Relief Association Working Group Bill on February 5, 2010, and adopted it for inclusion in the Omnibus Pension Bill. A technical amendment was also adopted to insert a few words that were omitted when the bill was drafted. No other changes were made to the Working Group's proposals. We will continue to keep you updated on the progress of the bill as it makes its way through the legislative process. Working Group information, including a copy of the bill, is available on the Office of the State Auditor's website at:

<http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=reliefworkinggroup>

Municipal Ratification of Benefit Levels

Our office has received questions regarding municipal ratification of relief association benefit levels. A relief association initiates a change in benefit levels by amending its bylaws. A city council or town board can choose to approve a relief association benefit change or choose not to approve the change. Once the bylaws are ratified by the governing body, however, the benefit levels are guaranteed by the municipality.

In approving the benefit levels, the city council or town board assumes responsibility for ensuring the relief association Special Fund has sufficient assets to cover approved benefit levels.

The Office of the State Auditor knows of no authority for a city council to ratify a relief association benefit level while simultaneously limiting any future contributions to the relief association to amounts less than those required by Minnesota law. Minnesota law is clear that a municipality is required to make any contributions that become due to the relief association at an approved benefit level.

For more information regarding municipal contribution requirements, please see the Office of the State Auditor's Statement of Position on this topic at:

http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/other/Statements/required%20municipal%20contributions_0901.pdf.

Meet Your Pension Analyst

Several fire service organizations coordinate an annual Fire Service Day at the State Capitol. This year's Fire Service Day is scheduled for Tuesday, March 2. Volunteer firefighters who are attending the conference and visit the State Capitol are encouraged to stop by our office to meet their pension analyst and the Pension Division team.

Our office is located one block north of the capitol, at 525 Park Street, on the fifth floor (see www.osa.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=directions). Information regarding Fire Service Day is provided on the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association website at <http://www.msfc.org/>.

2009 Reporting-Year Forms

As a reminder, the 2009 Reporting-Year forms are available for download from the Office of the State Auditor's website. The forms are due by March 31, 2010, for volunteer fire relief associations with less than \$200,000 in assets and liabilities, or by June 30, 2010, for relief associations that exceed this statutory threshold. Once a relief association exceeds the \$200,000 statutory threshold, it must continue to have an audit prepared and maintain the June 30 reporting deadline, even if the association's assets and liabilities subsequently drop below the threshold.

An informational document which provides detailed instructions for accessing the online reporting forms and helpful hints for completing them is available at:

http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/forms/pen/ReportingForms/pensionrf_infoandhelpfulhints.pdf

If you have questions please contact us:

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