



PERS | newsbreak

Alaska Public Employees' Retirement System

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Safeguarding Your Identity After Death Important Notice for Retirees and Their Spouses

It is well known that taking steps to protect yourself from identity theft is important, but what is less known is that identity protection efforts need to continue after death. According to fraud prevention firm ID Analytics, nearly 2.5 million deceased Americans have had their identity used to fraudulently open credit card accounts, apply for loans, file fraudulent tax returns to obtain refunds, or to obtain other services. ID Analytics reports that roughly 2,200 families of deceased persons are deliberately targeted each day. Alaska retirees are among those targeted.

The Division of Retirement and Benefits has received an increasing number of reports from survivors of our members who have been victims of this fraud. The perpetrators troll through obituaries looking for deceased persons who have worked in Alaska government and are assumed to have been recipients of PERS or TRS benefits.

The good news is that ultimately the surviving family members are not financially responsible for any charges arising from this type of identity theft. However, the scam creates a lot of distress to the family members while the fraud is being sorted out.

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Retirees in Touch: Karen Chesler Cox Seeking Sunshine and Finding Purpose in the Beehive State

Karen Chesler Cox grew up in Idaho and moved to Alaska in 1961 with her spouse, Leon Chesler, when he took a job with the FAA in Anchorage. In Anchorage, Karen spent her career teaching social studies in the Anchorage School District from 1969-1990 at Mears, Service-Hanshew, and Hanshew Jr. High. Karen and Leon planned to stay in Alaska for two years, but their enjoyable jobs and the great people they met kept them in the state—they didn't end up leaving until 1992.



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Safeguarding Your Identity After Death: Important Notice for Retirees and Their Spouses

Our promise to you

The Division guards all of our members' and survivors' personal information and do not release it to anyone unless a written release or other legal documents signed by the member is produced. Additionally, to protect yourself, here are a few things you need to know about our practices. The Division will not:

- Contact your survivors in the evenings or on the weekends, which is when most of the phone call scams occur.
- Delay benefits from a retirement plan due to issues with life insurance—our pension plans and life insurance plans are separate.
- Contact your survivors by phone as the initial contact. Our first contact with survivors occurs by official letter, not with a phone call, unless your family has contacted us first to report a death.
- Ask for your Social Security number or other personal information from your survivor—we already have all your information on file.
- Ask your survivor to provide their personal information over the phone. We guard the identity information of members and survivors under strict confidentiality statutes.
- Try to intimidate or threaten your survivor or family in any way. We are here to help survivors through this process.

All contacts to your survivor or family members will come through official phone calls from the Division during regular business hours. If there is any doubt on the part of your family members that they are speaking with a Division of Retirement and Benefits employee, they should terminate the call and contact the Division directly and ask to speak to the Benefits Processing Manager or other Survivor Section staff member.

What to do if you are contacted

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) recommends survivors take the following steps to protect your identity after your death:

- In obituaries, list the age, but don't include birth date, mother's maiden name or other personal identifiers that could be useful to ID thieves. Omitting the



person's address also reduces the likelihood of a home burglary during the funeral (sadly, this does happen).

- Use certified mail with “return receipt,” send copies of the death certificate to each credit-reporting bureau — Equifax, Experian and TransUnion — and ask them to place a “deceased alert” on the credit report. Mail certificates to banks, insurers, brokerages and credit card and mortgage companies where the deceased held accounts. If you're closing an individual account, make sure the institution lists “Closed: Account Holder Is Deceased” as the reason. For joint accounts, remove the deceased's name.
- Report the death to Social Security by calling (800) 772-1213. This is important, because otherwise it takes 6 months for Vital Statistics reports to show up in the Social Security system. This notification will stop any thief from using the deceased's Social Security number fraudulently.
- Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles to cancel the deceased's driver's license to prevent duplicates from being issued to fraudsters.
- A few weeks later, check the credit report of the person at [annualcreditreport.com](https://www.annualcreditreport.com) to see if there has been any suspicious activity. Several months later, go to the same site to get another free report from a different credit-reporting bureau.

When you are finished with this Newsbreak, take this article and put it with your important papers so that your family will be prepared for any contact they may receive in the event of your death. 🐦

Report from the Field

Meet Lisa Templeton

Lisa Templeton was born and raised in Juneau, spending much of her childhood on her parents' fishing boat in and around Southeast's many small fishing communities. "My parents each moved to Alaska as young adults for a new adventure and found themselves commercial fishing," she explained. Lisa stayed in the capital city, which has been her primary home for the majority of her life, except for a few years spent in Montana during her earlier years in middle school and high school. Like her parents did before her, Lisa said, "I found Juneau to be a wonderful place to raise my three children as well."

Lisa is one of the Division's Regional Counselors, and has worked for the Division for a total of six and a half years. Before coming to the Division, Lisa worked for the City and Borough of Juneau's Risk Management office and at a financial consulting firm. She started her career with the Division in the late nineties in the Insurance Benefits Section, assisting members with their health, life and disability plans. She later worked as a specialist in the Communications Section, rewriting plan booklets and brochures. Lisa left the Division to work in the private sector as an optician, managing an optical dispensary. She enjoyed this career for several years, but eventually returned to the work for the Division in 2014. She began as a specialist in the Health Plan Services Section and was promoted to her current position as Regional Counselor in 2015.

Lisa is the Western Regional Counselor. The Western Region spans a large part of coastal Alaska, including Kodiak, the Kenai Peninsula and the Aleutian Chain. Lisa said, "I always had a great desire to explore more of Alaska, and this position has provided me with that opportunity." Through this position, she has traveled to Fairbanks, Barrow, Nome, Homer, Seward, and Kodiak. "I am fascinated by the diversity of cultures, ways of life, and scenery in the different communities around the state," she explained. Due to travel restrictions for State of Alaska employees during this time of budgetary limitations, Lisa is currently unable to travel, but she hopes to be back counseling in the field in the near future.

Helping Alaska's public employees to better understand their benefits and options while planning for their future is what Lisa finds rewarding about her position as a retirement counselor. "As a counselor, I must listen carefully to members' questions and concerns, and explain complex retirement and benefit plans, policies, procedures, statutes and regulations in a way that is easily understood," she



said. Lisa works with a wide range of people from all walks of life, and considers effective and thorough communication to be a valuable skill in her position, as well as being committed to providing great service to members. "I enjoy the variety of job duties and greatly enjoy working with the public; there is rarely a dull moment!" she explained.

The one thing Lisa would like all members to know about preparing for and enjoying retirement is that "an enjoyable retirement requires planning and preparation." As part of that planning, Lisa highly recommends that members attend seminars offered by the Division, and that they schedule individual appointments with a counselor prior to retirement. "This will provide the necessary tools and knowledge to make informed decisions so members do not enter into retirement in the dark. Many decisions made at retirement are irrevocable so we want our members to thoroughly understand their options," she explained.

While not traveling around the state assisting members as a Regional Counselor, Lisa often travels on her own to explore the Alaskan wilderness. "I try to spend as much time outdoors as possible," she explained. "I enjoy hiking, camping, and boating with family and friends, and like to walk and jog with my black lab mix, George." 🐾



Alaska Retirement Systems Market Value: April 30, 2016

Public Employees' Retirement System
\$15,953,148,217

Teachers' Retirement System
\$7,863,286,412

Judicial Retirement System
\$170,688,989

National Guard/Naval Militia Retirement System
\$35,997,293

Alaska Supplemental Annuity Plan
\$3,384,474,062

Alaska Deferred Compensation Plan
\$805,395,918

Alaska Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA) A Refresher

The Alaska Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA) was established in 1966 to assist retirees who elect to remain in state to defray the higher cost of living in Alaska. If you are eligible, you may receive the COLA in addition to your monthly benefit. The amount of COLA a PERS member receives is 10% of their base retirement benefit (no minimum amount).

Who is Eligible to Receive COLA?

If you reside in Alaska after you retire, you may receive COLA in addition to your regular monthly benefit. PERS Tier I retirees and their survivors are eligible upon retirement, regardless of age. All other PERS Defined Benefit Plan retirees and their survivors are eligible at age 65. All members receiving disability benefits are eligible, regardless of age or date of hire.

“Residing in Alaska” means domiciled and physically present in Alaska. A domicile is that place where you have your true, fixed, and permanent home and principal establishment and to which, whenever you are absent, you intend to return. An absence, which exceeds 90 days, constitutes a break in residency for COLA purposes.

If you become a resident out of state and later return to Alaska and become a resident again, you are eligible to receive COLA if you complete and submit the necessary forms. You will not lose COLA permanently; you can stop and start it.

If I leave Alaska on a trip, will I be entitled to COLA while I am away?

Yes, you are entitled to COLA during the time you are gone if you return to Alaska in less than 91 days. Please note that a period of 90 consecutive days does not start over

with a new calendar year. You may be asked to provide copies of your travel documentation, which shows your departure and return dates.

You are NOT eligible for COLA and you are required to notify the Division in writing (use form 02-824a or your own written notice) if:

- You intend to be gone from Alaska continuously for more than 90 days;
- Your current absence exceeds 90 consecutive days (COLA entitlement ends retroactively to the end of the month of your departure from Alaska); or
- Your principal domicile is no longer in Alaska.

Am I entitled to COLA if I am gone from Alaska for more than 90 days due to illness?

You may continue to receive COLA for up to 6 months if:

- 1) You are out of Alaska because of illness, and
- 2) Your physician certifies your absence is necessary on a form (gen023) provided by the Division.

If your absence exceeds six months, COLA will stop on the first day of the seventh month following the date you left. If your illness began before leaving Alaska, you must make every effort to notify the Division before departing Alaska. Eligibility under this provision is a one-time exception to the requirements.

When does COLA stop and start?

COLA will stop on the first of the month following your departure from Alaska. If you receive COLA to which you are not entitled, you are required to repay it to the PERS.

Continued on next page

Alaska Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA): A Refresher

The Division will notify you of your options for repaying an overpayment. COLA will start again on the first of the month AFTER:

- 1) You return to Alaska; and
- 2) Your notification (form 02-1896a) is received by the Division.

If your notification is received or postmarked after the first of the month, COLA will not start again until the following month, regardless of your return date to Alaska. To avoid missing out on COLA benefits, you should submit your notification as soon as you return to Alaska. You may hand-deliver or mail your notification form to the Division. Mailed notifications must be postmarked in Alaska. Private meter postmarks will not be accepted. If a postmark date is illegible, your notification is presumed to have been mailed five working days before the date the notification is received.

Are there different rules if I am an alternate payee?

A QDRO can award a portion of this allowance to the alternate payee in the same proportion as the regular benefit.

Although it is highly recommended the order specifically address this allowance, in those orders that do not and where the alternate payee is not receiving a flat dollar amount of the regular benefit, we will assume COLA is also a shared entitlement. Eligibility to receive COLA is based on where the member resides. No alternate payee may receive a portion of the COLA if the member lives outside Alaska.

PERS Alaska Statute 39.35.670—A person who knowingly makes a false statement, or falsifies or permits to be falsified a record of this system, in an attempt to defraud the system, is guilty of a Class A Misdemeanor and upon conviction is punishable by a fine of not more than \$500 or by imprisonment for not more than 12 months, or by both.

Still have questions?

Please contact the Division to speak with a representative. You can find more COLA information and all of the associated forms on our website: doa.alaska.gov/drb/forms/cola-forms.html. 🐦

Field Counselors Travel Restrictions

On January 5, 2016, Governor Bill Walker announced broad travel restrictions for State of Alaska employees. As a result, the Division of Retirement and Benefits is unable to send counselors to the intended travel regions as planned for the 2016 spring travel season until further notice. We will reevaluate our budgetary limitations over the summer and will continue to keep you posted on any changes. In the interim, Regional Counselors are offering some other avenues for education for employers and their employees. During the month that you were scheduled to receive a visit from your Regional Counselor, we will be contacting employers to work on organizing counseling/training options either telephonically, through WebEx or in person (for Anchorage and Juneau only).

Some examples of these training options are:

- Individual telephonic appointments at the members' convenience.
- Organize a round table group teleconference meeting to go over provided materials for a specific topic or tier group.

- Webinars provided by the State and/or Empower Retirement.
- Set-up an on-site visit for employers located in the Juneau or Anchorage areas (with either Division or Empower Retirement Counselors).

During these sessions, employees can discuss the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) benefits for all tiers, the Teacher Retirement System (TRS), the Supplemental Annuity Plan (SBS) and/or the Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP). We are also encouraging employers to contact their Regional Counselor to discuss which topics, times and services work best for you and your employees. 🐦

Have questions about your retirement and benefits?

Visit Alaska.gov/drb.

Post Retirement Pension Adjustment Will Be Paid with July 2016 Check

The 2016 automatic Post Retirement Pension Adjustment (PRPA) will be paid with the July 2016 check.

The automatic PRPA is payable to a Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) Defined Benefit Plan retiree under age 60, if retired for five years or more on or before July 1, 2016, and a Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) Defined Benefit Plan retiree under age 60, if retired for eight years on or before July 1, 2016.

In addition to the above requirements, a retiree must have been receiving a benefit in the prior year (2015) to be eligible for the 2016 PRPA. Eligible recipients, who have not received pension benefits during the entire preceding calendar year, will receive a prorated PRPA.

If you meet these requirements or are age 60 to 64 on July 1, 2016, you will receive 50% (0.163%) of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) change during 2015.

Retirees age 65 or older and all disability benefit recipients receive 75% (0.245%) of the CPI. The PRPA for survivor benefit recipients is calculated on the member's eligibility.

The CPI for the 2016 PRPA is 0.327%.

If you do not meet any of the above criteria, you are not eligible.

Due to fund conditions, the Division did not recommend an ad hoc PRPA for 2016. The ad hoc PRPA is defined in statute as, "...based on the financial condition of the retirement funds."

- This example shows a retiree who is receiving a benefit from PERS.
 - Your statement will show more than one benefit if you worked for both retirement systems or if you are also receiving a survivor's benefit.
- 1) Prior PRPAs: The combined monthly amount of all PRPAs paid from the date you retired through June 30, 2016.
 - 2) 2016 Automatic PRPA: This is effective July 1, 2016, based on the change in consumer price index (CPI).

Example of monthly statement:

<i>Monthly Benefit Summary</i>			
Base Benefits		Deductions	
PERS ORIGINAL BASE	\$XX.XX	PERS FED INCOME WITHHOLD	\$XX.XX
1) PERS PRIOR PRPAS	\$XX.XX	PERS DENTAL, VISION, AUDIO	\$XX.XX
2) PERS 2016 AUTOMATIC PRPA	\$XX.XX	PERS OPTIONAL LIFE INSUR	\$XX.XX
		PERS LONG TERM CARE - RET	\$XX.XX

Alaska Retirement Management Board Meeting

June 23 to 24, Anchorage

Alaska Retirement Management Board (ARMB) meetings are open to the public. You can find details about future meetings, minutes of past meetings, and meeting agendas at Alaska.gov/drb/boards. If you have questions, contact Judy Hall, ARMB liaison, at (907) 465-3749.

Retirees in Touch: Karen Chesler Cox

After retiring, Karen moved away from Alaska and has been living in North Salt Lake, Utah. Karen said, “I left Alaska for two reasons: the weather—I like it sunny and warm—and my family lived in the west and I wanted to be closer to them.”

In Utah, Karen filled her time working for the Utah State Senate, first as a page and then as the Senate recorder. “When the opportunity arose to work for the Senate, I took it. It was a fun job and I met some really wonderful people,” she said. It was an appealing option to her given that the Utah State Senate only meets for six weeks each year. Karen later worked in the office of U.S. Senator Robert Bennett. “Both experiences were wonderful. Teaching social studies gave me insight into the political process and working in the Senate and for Senator Bennett gave me a different perspective on how our government is run,” she said.

After a time away from Alaska, Karen grew fond of the Beehive State. “I fell in love with the history of Utah, my adopted state, and shared that history with others,” she explained. She was able to share this love of history through working at the Salt Lake City Convention and Visitors Center, giving city tours for Meetings America, and working as a docent at the Utah State Capitol and the Governor’s Mansion.

Apart from working, Karen has spent her retirement in Utah pursuing other interests and activities. She and her spouse were involved with the 2002 Salt Lake Olympics and were volunteers for the opening ceremony of the Paralympics and at the SLOC Visitors Center, where they met and assisted visitors from all over the world.

One of the hobbies Karen has picked up in her retirement is researching her family history. “I have gained lots of knowledge and computer experience because of it. I have been able to pursue my research at the Family History Library in [Salt Lake City] and have volunteered on the British floor for about ten years. I have really enjoyed the experience,” she said. After several years of research, Karen wrote and published a history of her parents.

Karen’s immediate family has grown and spread out across the country. She and her spouse love having contact with her four children and seventeen grandchildren who live in Oregon, Wyoming, Utah, Las Vegas, and as far away as Argentina. The distance is no obstacle as they enjoy getting away whenever possible. “We have had the opportunity to travel widely...our favorite trip was to Israel, Egypt, and Jordan in 2009,” she said.

Karen explained that what she loves most about retirement is, “the freedom to spend my day accomplishing things that I think are really important. I love to walk, pursue my studies, read, meet new people, volunteer, travel, sew, [and] serve others. I enjoy the small and simple things of life like a beautiful mountain, a sunrise or a sunset...life is good! I am grateful for the good health I enjoy that makes all of this possible.”

Karen attributes being able to enjoy her retirement to her Alaska retirement plan and smart investments earlier in life: “My Alaska retirement has been a great blessing in my life. It has given me the money and opportunity to go to new places, do many different things, and meet many interesting people along the way.” In addition to her retirement savings, while employed Karen invested as much of her salary as possible in tax-sheltered annuities in order to help reach her financial goals. “It has added greatly to my retirement and has made travel and other things possible for me,” she said.

For members preparing for retirement, apart from smart financial investments, Karen gave this advice: “It is important to have a number of hobbies or things that you really enjoy doing. I love to quilt, read, garden, research family history, go out to lunch, and be with family. I don’t know how I had time to work.” 🐦

We Want to Share Your Retirement Story



We want to share your retirement story with your fellow members. Are you volunteering, traveling, involved in the community or just enjoying life? Let us know where you are living now, what you are involved in, where you were employed, and how your State of Alaska retirement has

allowed you to enjoy new adventures in retirement. Submit your stories on our website at Alaska.gov/drb/retirement/retireesInTouch.html, email your stories to doa.drb@alaska.gov, or mail your stories and photos to the address on this newsletter, Attention: Newsbreak Editor. 🐦

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The Alaska Department of Administration complies with Title II of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The PERS Newsbreak is available in alternative communication formats upon request. DRB ADA Coordinator: (800) 821-2251; in Juneau: (907) 465-4460, or contact the TDD for the hearing impaired at (907) 465-2805.

Note: The Division of Retirement and Benefits is unable to unsubscribe members from our mailing list at this time. The Division has a fiduciary duty to provide both its active and retired members with information regarding their health and retirement benefits, including—but not limited to—benefit education, plan enrollment, and any changes in the plans. While we acknowledge that it can be frustrating to receive a high volume of communication from the Division, it is necessary to keep our members up to date on current information and educational opportunities concerning their health and retirement benefits. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you.

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Where Are You? Review Our List of Members Who May Be Eligible for Benefits

The Division of Retirement and Benefits would like to locate people who no longer have a correct address in our system. Please review the list of names on our website at Alaska.gov/drb/headlines/2016/05/03/where-are-you. If you have a current address or any other information for anyone listed, please call the Member Services Contact Center toll-free at (800) 821-2251 or (907) 465-4460 in Juneau. **Please note:** People may have the same name as you or they may have a new last name due to marriage, divorce, or name change. Any information you can provide is appreciated. 🐦



Stay up to date on upcoming seminars, events, and tips for your retirement.

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