

# THE LATEST WORD

September 2003

## Official IPERS Information ♦ Retain For Your Records

Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System ♦ PO Box 9117 ♦ Des Moines IA 50306-9117  
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E-mail: [info@ipers.org](mailto:info@ipers.org) Web site: [www.ipers.org](http://www.ipers.org)

## Audit Findings

In the last few years, IPERS has steadily increased the number and thoroughness of its audits, to ensure proper compliance with the IPERS laws and rules. Our main concerns have been the proper coverage of eligible individuals and proper wage reporting. It is absolutely imperative that the employers pay close attention to the rules governing their identification of employees covered under IPERS and the definitions of wages for covered employment during the payroll process, to ensure proper IPERS coverage.

As indicated above, the more prominent areas where the compliance officers find issues are:

- **Identifying covered employees, including issues related to:** temporary employees, students, part-time elected officials, and independent contractors,
- **Applying the covered wage rules, including issues related to:** vacation and sick leave lump sum payments, early retirement/severance packages, wage equivalents, and cafeteria plans with employer contributions.

These areas should be closely monitored by the reporting officials to ensure accurate coverage of all workers and accurate wage reporting. IPERS benefit payments are ultimately based on the accuracy of these reports from the employer. If the reports are wrong, so are any related benefits paid. **Failures can**

**result in time-consuming and costly corrections, unpleasant business for IPERS, members, and employers alike, but which are nonetheless required under the law.**

What can the employer do to help with these matters? First, determine if you have made proper coverage decisions for all your workers and job classes. This is easier said than done. Larger employers generally have a Human Resources Department that can devote time to this. Medium or small employers may not have this luxury. For example, temporary employment has always been a difficult issue. Some employers have had their individual software modified to help ensure IPERS coverage after temporary employees qualify for IPERS coverage.

Most wage reporting problems tend to revolve around specialized fringe benefits allowed by various employers.

**If an employer has a fringe benefit program, e.g., cafeteria plan with employer contributions, meals/transportation/clothing allowance, expense reimbursements, etc., reporting officials are strongly encouraged to provide all related information to IPERS to determine whether any portion of these specialized payments should be treated as covered wages.**

The best front-line resource employers have is the IPERS Employer Handbook. Chapters three and four cover most of the troubling issues for our employers. An updated

2003 handbook is included with this mailing. The previous paper version was issued June 2001. Our Web site ([www.ipers.org](http://www.ipers.org)) has the updated version for you to review online. Of course, you can always call and talk to one of the members of the Employer Relations Team.

## ICON Is UP and Running and Available for Your Use

What is ICON? It is IPERS Connection Online—the secure, password-protected Web site used by employers to report wages, enroll employees, change information for employees, inquire about past wage reports, change employer information, and contact specific departments with questions or comments.

ICON will provide you with a quick, convenient way to interact with IPERS without all the paperwork. There will be no copying and mailing of quarterly wage reports or diskettes, no forms to change employees' addresses, no lost remittance advices because they may be stored electronically for you to print off at your convenience, and no more \$50 administrative fee for reporting more than 50 employees on paper. You can even retrieve previous quarters' wage reports from the ICON system.

## Try It. You'll Like It!

"Easy to follow and understand."  
"Convenient." "I think it's great!"

These are direct quotes from employers, just like you, who are currently using the ICON system. These employers' experience on Web sites ranged from none to a lot, so don't feel like you have to have any experience at all surfing the Web.

There is an online User Manual to assist you, but most of the current group just figured it out as they went along. IPERS staff is available to help you along the way.

For employers who usually report wages on diskette there is a file transfer option for reporting wages. It will require no changes to the electronic file format you are currently using.

For employers who send paper wage reports there is a wage entry screen, prepopulated with employees reported the previous quarter to complete and modify.

Still not convinced? Visit our Web site at [www.ipers.org](http://www.ipers.org). Select the Employer Home Tab and find Sneak Preview of ICON. This will give you some idea as to what the screens will look like for you to report wages, enroll members, or retrieve reports.

*If you report for more than one employer, we encourage you to take this time to consolidate into one employer number. It will save you submitting more than one wage report. Please contact a member of our Employer Relations Team to do this. Consolidation is not required to use ICON. It is something you may*

want to think about to lessen the steps involved in the reporting process.

## How to Enroll in ICON

You are invited at this time to enroll and use ICON. Log on to the IPERS Web site at [www.ipers.org](http://www.ipers.org). Click on Employer Forms within the Employers section of the Web site. Select IPERS Connection Online (ICON) User Name/Authority Form and download this form to your printer.

If you have more than one user at your site, please complete one form per user. Mail the form to IPERS, Attention Melinda Rushing, PO BOX 9117, DES MOINES IA 50306-9117. We cannot accept faxes of this form; the original must be mailed to us.

Be sure that your User Name/ Authority Form is filled out completely. Incomplete forms will be mailed back to the sender for completion.

A copy of your form will be mailed back to you along with the User Name you are to use to logon to the system. Your password will be e-mailed to you.

At this time we are unable to offer restrictions on which applications within the site individual users may access. This feature will be available with future versions.

If you need help completing the form, please call Mike Bridges at (515) 281-0083 or Melinda Rushing at (515) 281-0033. Questions concerning the ICON system may be directed to Virginia Ramirez at (515) 281-0091.

We look forward to working with you on the ICON system!

## ICON System Requirements

To ensure the safety of data being transmitted via the Internet, IPERS' requirement for using ICON is the standard 128 bit encryption that comes with any of the following browsers. All of our transactions will be 128 bit encrypted using SSL, the standard on the Internet for any sensitive transaction, and used by banks, e-commerce, and credit card transactions. Note: You must have access to a computer with an operating system among the types listed below that is able to connect to the Internet using one of the browsers indicated. If your browser isn't on this list, it may not properly work with the ICON system. IPERS also requires that your browser have 128 bit encryption capability which is available as a free download from any of the browser suppliers.

### Platform

#### Windows

### Operating System

**Win95, Win98, WinXP, WinNT, and Win2000**

### Internet Explorer

**Version 5.0 or higher, 128 bit strong encryption**

### Netscape

**Version 6.0 or higher, 128 bit strong encryption**

### Platform

#### Macintosh

### Operating System

**OS 9.2 and above**

### Internet Explorer

**Version 5.0 or higher, 128 bit strong encryption**

### Netscape

**Version 6.0 or higher, 128 bit strong encryption**

For your protection, IPERS **does not support beta versions** of browsers. Under normal circumstances, IPERS will support the **final** version of a browser approximately three months after the release date.

For security reasons, certain versions of browsers occasionally “expire” their ability to perform sensitive transactions such as wage reporting. In order to maintain its high degree of customer security, IPERS does not allow access to ICON using these browsers. In order to continue to access ICON, some customers will need to upgrade to a newer, supported version of their preferred browser.

**If you are not sure which version of Netscape or Microsoft Internet Explorer you are currently using, follow these easy steps:**

**Windows:**

1. Click on **Help** in your browser’s top menu bar.
2. Scroll down to **About Navigator/Communicator** or **About Internet Explorer**.
3. The top line of the resulting window displays your browser version.

**Macintosh:**

1. With the browser open click on the **Apple menu**.
2. Click on **About Navigator/Communicator** or **About Internet Explorer**.
3. The top line of the resulting window states your browser version.

The following Web sites offer downloads to upgrade software for browsers if needed:

**Netscape:**

[www.netscape.com/download](http://www.netscape.com/download)

**Internet Explorer:**

[www.microsoft.com/windows/ie](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie)

Users will also need to have Version 5.0 or greater of Adobe Reader installed in order to read attachments that will be received in confirmation e-mails. This may be downloaded from the Employer Home page of the IPERS Web site, free of charge.

The ICON system hours of availability are listed in the online User Manual. There may be times during these hours of operation when the system will become unavailable because of reasons beyond our control. When this happens, a notice will be published on the Employer Home page on the IPERS Web site: [www.ipers.org/employers.htm](http://www.ipers.org/employers.htm)

## **Frequently Asked Questions from Current ICON Users**

**Q.** I received my e-mail confirming that my wage report has been accepted with attachments containing my Debit/Credit Memo Statement and my Remittance Advices for the next quarter, but I can’t open these attachments. What could be the problem?

**A.** It is possible that you don’t have a current version of Adobe Reader installed on your computer. You may download Adobe Reader free of charge from the bottom of the Employer Home page on our Web site. If you are using Outlook Express, it may be limiting your ability to access certain file types. Contact IPERS staff if you believe this may be your problem.

**Q.** Do I need to send IPERS any paper work at all for quarterly wage reporting if I report wages using ICON?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I am enrolled as a user in the ICON system, but sent my quarterly wage report to IPERS to enter this quarter instead of doing it myself. Why did I get an e-mail confirming that my wage report has been accepted with attachments of my Debit/Credit Memo Statement and my Remittance Advices for the next quarter?

**A.** IPERS staff is also using the ICON system to input wages for those employers who send their reports for us to enter into the computer system. Confirmation e-mails with attachments will be sent to the e-mail addresses for those employers having e-mails on file because they are already enrolled in ICON. Reporting officials will need to download these attachments since they will no longer be receiving these via mail.

## **Thank You Pilot Group**

Thank you to the twenty-five employers who participated in the testing of the ICON system. The IPERS staff really had them working hard, and they all did it with a smile in their voices.

Lots of phone calls and e-mails later, IPERS was able to deploy an employers’ secure Web site which is working well, to the delight of all involved. Our hats off to you, Pilot Group!

## **IPERS Address**

While IPERS has been in its current location almost three years, some employers continue to use part or all of our former address when mailing

wage reports, contributions, and other information to us. We do not always receive everything that is mailed to our office. The post office returns to the sender all mail that is incorrectly addressed. We want to receive all that you send us. When communicating with IPERS by mail, please be sure that you are using our correct mailing address.

PO BOX 9117  
DES MOINES IA 50306-9117

**FYI:**

❖ The *Employer Handbook* has been revised and is included with this quarterly mailing. It should become your reference guide immediately upon receipt. It is also available on our Web site at [www.ipers.org](http://www.ipers.org).

❖ *Special Occupation Class Rate Change:* Please double check your 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter reports prior to submission to ensure you have updated the special occupation class codes to reflect the 7/1/03 rate changes. The rates were published in the March 2003 issue of *The Latest Word* and are also in the revised *Employer Handbook*.

## **IPERS Develops New System for Employer Notification of Law Changes and Compliance Issues**

IPERS has used *The Latest Word* as the main vehicle to update employers on law changes and compliance issues for several years. While this system has worked fairly well, it has been difficult for some employers to keep track of this information, and it has also been difficult to routinely reference the exact location of information in the newsletter, especially for editions published in previous years.

### **IPERS Employer Bulletins**

Effective July 1, 2003, we will be implementing a more systematic approach to transmitting information to employer reporting officials. Future law changes and compliance information will be sent out as bulletins that will be identified by calendar year and number. For example, the first bulletin will be IEB (IPERS Employer Bulletin) 2003-1. Each bulletin will be dated and will have a similar format including:

- TO:
- FROM:
- SUBJECT:
- IMPLEMENTATION DATE
- EXPLANATION OF LAW CHANGE/COMPLIANCE ISSUE
- WHO TO CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Reporting officials can reference the particular bulletin if they have questions or comments, and the documents can be kept in numerical order for filing and retrieval purposes. There also may be slight variations in format depending on the subject matter being covered. The first bulletin will explain the purpose for the system and the format in more detail.

It is planned that *The Latest Word* will still be published, and it will cross-reference subjects in the bulletins, but will also include helpful information on other issues. We welcome your feedback on the bulletin system and also encourage your suggestions concerning articles for *The Latest Word*.

## NEW REPORTING OFFICIAL TRAINING – October 21 & 22, 2003

- This training session is offered semiannually and is designed to assist new reporting officials, who are responsible for IPERS reporting, in understanding their responsibilities. There is no charge for this training. Sessions will be held at IPERS, 7401 Register Drive, Des Moines.
- This training session includes basic information on topics such as temporary employment, optional coverage, coverage of wages and benefits, and reporting forms and procedures.
- Please complete and return the attached registration to IPERS at the location on the bottom of the registration. Remember to indicate the day you wish to attend.
- Registrations are due by October 10, 2003. Return your registration early for best availability.
- After IPERS has processed your registration, you will receive a confirmation by mail or e-mail with more detailed location information.
- Training materials will be distributed the day of the session.
- Due to logistics and because there is no fee for this training, we are unable to provide refreshments. There are vending machines available at IPERS, or feel free to bring your own refreshments.
- Questions? Call IPERS at 800/622-3849 and ask for Melinda, Jim, Pat, Danielle, or Linda.

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Employer \_\_\_\_\_ IPERS Employer ID \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choice, if applicable.

_____ Tuesday, Oct 21, 2003	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
_____ Tuesday, Oct 21, 2003	1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
_____ Wednesday, Oct 22, 2003	9:00 am – 12:00 pm

RETURN TO:  
IPERS Employer Relations Team • PO BOX 9117 • DES MOINES IA 50306-9117  
Fax number: 515/281-0053