

Fundamentals

Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund
Retired Member Edition

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Identity Theft

Protect your most valuable possession

With the hectic holiday season approaching, it is especially important to guard your personal information from would-be thieves. Your Social Security number (SSN) and other personal information is worth more to a thief than you might imagine. It can be used to open a checking account or credit card, get a driver's license in your name, even rent an apartment or buy a car. And it would be *your* responsibility to clear your name; a daunting task which, according to victims of fraud, can take many hours of legwork and years of frustration to resolve.



According to the Social Security Office of the Inspector General, more than 25,000 allegations of fraud involving the misuse of a Social Security number were processed in the first half of fiscal year 2001 alone.

Below are some tips to help you keep your personal information safe.

What you can do to protect your identity

- Don't carry extra credit cards, your Social Security card, birth certificate or passport except when needed. **This limits the amount of information a thief can steal.**
- Protect your Social Security number. **Release it only when absolutely necessary:** for tax forms, health insurance, employment records, and most banking, stock, and property transactions (including IMRF). Your SSN is the key to your credit and banking accounts and is the prime target of criminals. **Never** send your Social Security number by email.
- Shred any paper that contains personal information, **such as credit card numbers, bank account information, or Social Security numbers**, when you no longer need it. Thieves, known as "dumpster divers," rummage through trash looking for personal information. Always take credit card receipts with you -- never toss them in a public trash container.
- Carefully review your credit card statements and phone bills for unauthorized use.
- Order your credit report at least once a year from each of the three credit bureaus to check for inaccuracies and fraudulent use of your accounts – and to make sure no accounts have been opened in your name by someone else.
- Never give your credit card number or other personal information over the phone unless you have a trusted business relationship with the company and **you** have initiated the call. Identity thieves have been known to call potential victims with a fake story that goes something like this: "Today is your lucky day! You have been chosen by our sweepstakes to receive a free trip to the Bahamas. All we need is your credit card number and expiration date to verify you as the lucky winner."



Information compiled from the Social Security Administration and the Privacy Rights website. If you are interested in reading more about identity theft, links to both of these websites and more can be found in the retiree area of www.imrf.org, under the link, "Fundamentals Plus." ▲

Looking for more information on these topics?
Check out the Retiree area of IMRF Online at www.imrf.org and look for "Fundamentals Plus"

Illinois Circuit Breaker Program can give you a break on prescription costs



The state of Illinois expanded the income requirements for the Circuit Breaker/Pharmaceutical Assistance Program as of January 1, 2001. This program provides prescription coverage for certain chronic conditions to those who meet financial need criteria.

Who should apply?

Apply if you:

- Are disabled, or are age 65 or older; and
- Have an income of \$21,218 a year or less for a single person, \$28,480 for a couple, or \$35,740 for a three person household; and
- Need prescriptions for any of the following: Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, cancer, diabetes, glaucoma, heart and blood pressure problems, lung disease and smoking related illnesses, osteoporosis, or Parkinson's disease.

What are your costs?

If approved, those with incomes at or below the poverty level would pay an annual \$5 fee to obtain the card, with no additional costs. Individuals with income over the poverty level would pay an annual \$25 fee and then a \$3 co-payment per prescription.

The program pays for your prescriptions until the accumulated total paid reaches \$2,000 for the year. After this

amount has been reached, you must pay the pharmacist 20 percent of the cost for each prescription. This charge is in addition to your co-payment.

Program doesn't cover everything. Keep in mind that this program **covers prescription medications for the above-mentioned conditions only**. If you take prescription medications for other conditions, and you don't have insurance that covers prescriptions, you may still want to look into a prescription drug discount plan such as NPA to help with these other costs. NPA is an IMRF-endorsed prescription discount plan that provides lower prescription costs at most pharmacies and further discounts for using their mail-order service. For more information, contact Doyle Rowe LTD online at www.doyle Rowe.com or call their enrollment hotline at 1-800-564-7227.

Want more information?

For more information, visit the Illinois Department of Revenue website (www.revenue.state.il.us) or call them at 1-800-624-2459. You can also take a look at the Illinois Department of Aging website at www.state.il.us/aging/ or call their Senior Help Line at 1-800-252-8966.▲

3 percent increase this January

You may notice that your January 2002 pension check is a slightly larger amount than usual. This reflects your annual pension increase.

Every January 1, your pension is increased 3 percent of *your original pension amount*. You can find the exact amount of your increase on your Certificate of Benefits, which was mailed to you when you first retired.

If you retired in 2001, your increase will be less than 3 percent because it is prorated based upon the number of months you have been retired.

If you have any questions regarding the annual increase, call IMRF at 1-800-ASK-IMRF (1-800-275-4673). For general information on increases, check out the "Pension Increases" pages in the retiree area of IMRF Online (www.imrf.org).▲

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"People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within."

— Elisabeth Kubler-Ross