



State Auditor  
Julie Blaha

## OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

# E-Update

November 20, 2020



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### 1. Message from Auditor Blaha

As I'm sure you know by now Executive Order 20-99, which puts in place certain temporary restrictions, goes into effect this evening at 11:59pm. While this decision was not easy to make, the rapid increase of cases called for decisive action. The data is clear that dialing back will save lives.

Have you ever wondered how people get the COVID-19 response info-graphics on their social media accounts so quickly? To find ready-made graphics that explain Minnesota's COVID-19 response, to share with your staff and the public, click here:

<https://mn.gov/covid19/media/share-message/index.jsp>.

This four-week pause will allow us to regroup as a state, slow the spread of COVID-19, and save lives. As always, thank you for everything you do.

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### 2. Deadline: Pension Reporting Information

Minnesota law requires forfeiture of fire state aid for volunteer fire relief associations that do not submit all required reporting information to the OSA by November 30, 2020. If 2019 reporting forms are not fully received in our office by that date, a relief association's 2020 state aid will be automatically forfeited and the relief association will not be eligible for future state aid until the 2019 reporting forms are received. The OSA does not have authority to grant filing extensions past the November 30 deadline.

If you have questions regarding reporting requirements or need access to online reporting forms, please contact the Pension Division at (651) 282-6110 or [pension@osa.state.mn.us](mailto:pension@osa.state.mn.us).

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### 3. Update: Volunteer Fire Relief Association Working Group

The Volunteer Fire Relief Association Working Group met on November 17. The Working Group considered a change to the calculation method for combined service pensions. Combined service pensions may be payable when a firefighter accrues service credit with more than one fire department. The Working Group also discussed the supplemental state aid program and whether the aid formula should be changed so it is based on the number of active firefighters, rather than population and market values. The Working Group will review how such a proposed

change could impact aid amounts at its next meeting. A discussion was also held on how long service credit should be retained when a nonvested member of a defined benefit plan leaves fire department service.

A recording of the meeting is available on the Office of the State Auditor (OSA)'s YouTube channel, at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkKaNqVJYulc26DQIA4wAIQ>.

Meeting agendas and materials are available on the Working Group page of the OSA website at: <https://www.auditor.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=reliefworkinggroup>.

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#### **4. Available: 2021 User Authorization Form**

All consultants and non-authority employees who need to access SAFES to download and submit forms on behalf of a TIF authority must annually file an authorization form with the OSA. The 2021 User Authorization Form is now available at the OSA website:

<https://www.auditor.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=userAuthorizationForm>.

The form can be submitted by e-mail, fax, or US mail.

Please note that employees of TIF authorities are not required to submit an authorization form and can request access to SAFES by contacting our office at [tif@osa.state.mn.us](mailto:tif@osa.state.mn.us). Authorization for employees of TIF authorities does not automatically expire. Please notify us of any staff changes so we can keep our contact records up to date.

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#### **5. Soon-to-be-Available: 2021 Summary City and County Budget Form**

The 2021 Summary City and County Budget Form will be available around the beginning of December 1 through SAFES at: <https://www.auditor.state.mn.us/SAFES/Default/Login>. The form will be due by January 19, 2021. You will need a SAFES User ID and Password to access the Form. If you need a SAFES User ID and Password, please send an email to [SAFES@osa.state.mn.us](mailto:SAFES@osa.state.mn.us) with your name, title, entity, public mailing address, email, and phone number.

Instructions on completing the form are located on the OSA website at:

<https://www.auditor.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=20111209.001>

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#### **6. Avoiding Pitfalls: Payroll and Other Email Scams Targeting Employees**

Each year, the IRS releases its “Dirty Dozen” of common tax-related scams. The category related to payroll and HR scams may be of particular relevance to local governments and their employees. The IRS describes two of the most common scams in this category—the gift card scam and the direct deposit scam.

This Avoiding Pitfall is available on our website at:

<https://www.auditor.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=20201120.000>

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