

SPECIAL TAX NOTICE REGARDING PLAN PAYMENTS

This notice contains important information you will need before you decide how to receive your Plan benefits.

This notice is provided to you by the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) because all or part of the payment that you will soon receive from MERS ("the Plan") may be eligible for rollover by you to a traditional IRA or other qualified employer plan. A "traditional IRA" does not include a Roth IRA, SIMPLE IRA, or educational IRA.

If you have additional questions after reading this notice, you can contact MERS as (225) 925-4810.

SUMMARY

There are two ways you may be able to receive a Plan payment that is eligible for rollover:

(1) certain payments can be made directly to a traditional IRA or, if you choose, another qualified employer plan that will accept it ("DIRECT ROLLOVER"), or

(2) the payment can be PAID TO YOU.

If you choose a *DIRECT ROLLOVER*

- Your payment will not be taxed in the current year and no income tax will be withheld.
- Your payment will be made directly to your traditional IRA or, if you choose, to another qualified employer plan that accepts your rollover. Your Plan payment cannot be rolled over to a Roth IRA, a SIMPLE IRA, or an education IRA because these are not traditional IRAs.
- Your payment will be taxed later when you take it out of the traditional IRA or the qualified employer plan.

If you choose to have a Plan payment that is eligible for rollover *PAID TO YOU*

- You will receive only 80% of your pre-tax employee contribution (contributions made on and after 1/1/00), because MERS is required to withhold 20% of the payment and send it to the IRS as income tax withholding to be credited against your taxes.
- Your payment will be taxed in the current year unless you roll it over. Under limited circumstances, you may be able to use special tax rules that could reduce the tax you owe. However, if you receive the payment before age 59 ½, you also may have to pay an additional 10% tax.
- You can roll over the payment by paying it to your traditional IRA or to another qualified employer plan that accepts your rollover within 60 days after you receive the payment. The amount rolled over will not be taxed until you take it out of the traditional IRA, or the qualified employer plan.

- If you want to roll over 100% of the payment to a traditional IRA or another qualified employer plan, *you must find other money to replace the 20% that was withheld.* If you roll over only the 80% that you receive, you will be taxed on the 20% that was withheld and that is not rolled over.

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I. *PAYMENTS THAT CAN AND CANNOT BE ROLLED OVER*

Payments from the Plan may be “eligible rollover distributions.” This means that they can be rolled over to an IRA or to another employer plan that accepts rollovers. Payments from a plan cannot be rolled over to a Roth IRA, a SIMPLE IRA, or an educational IRA. You may contact MERS to find out what portion of your payment is an eligible rollover distribution.

The following types of payments *cannot* be rolled over:

Non-taxable Payments. In general, only the “taxable portion” of your payment can be rolled over. If you have made “after-tax” employee contributions to the Plan, these contributions will be non-taxable when they are paid to you, and they cannot be rolled over. (After-tax employee contributions generally are contributions you made from your own pay that were already taxed.) You can contact MERS to find out how much of your payment is the taxable portion and how much is the after-tax employee contribution portion.

Payments Spread over Long Periods. You cannot roll over a payment if it is part of a series of equal (or almost equal) payments that are made at least once a year and that will last for

- your lifetime (or your life expectancy), or
- your lifetime and your beneficiary’s lifetime (or life expectancies), or
- a period of ten years or more.

Required Minimum Payments. Beginning when you reach age 70 ½ or retire, whichever is later, a certain portion of your payment cannot be rolled over because it is a “required minimum payment” that must be paid to you.

II. *DIRECT ROLLOVER*

A DIRECT ROLLOVER is a direct payment of the amount of your Plan benefits to a traditional IRA or another qualified employer plan that will accept it. You can choose a DIRECT ROLLOVER of all or any portion of your payment that is an eligible rollover distribution, as described in Part I. You are not taxed on any portion of your payment for which you choose a DIRECT ROLLOVER until you later take it out of the traditional IRA or qualified employer plan. In addition, no income tax withholding is required for any portion of your Plan benefits for which you choose a DIRECT

ROLLOVER.

DIRECT ROLLOVER to a Traditional IRA. You can open a traditional IRA to receive the direct rollover. If you choose to have your payment made directly to a traditional IRA, contact an IRA sponsor (usually a financial institution) to find out how to have your payment made in a direct rollover to a traditional IRA at that institution. If you are unsure of how to invest your money, you can temporarily establish a traditional IRA to receive the payment. However, in choosing a traditional IRA, you may wish to consider whether the traditional IRA you choose will allow you to move all or a part of your payment to another traditional IRA at a later date, without penalties or other limitations. See IRA Publication 590, *Individual Retirement Arrangements*, for more information on traditional IRAs (including limits on how often you can roll over between IRAs).

DIRECT ROLLOVER to a Plan. If you are employed by a new employer that has a qualified employer plan, and you want a direct rollover to that plan, ask the Plan Administrator of that plan whether it will accept your rollover. A qualified employer plan is not legally required to accept a rollover. If your new employer's plan does not accept a rollover, you can choose a DIRECT ROLLOVER to a traditional IRA.

DIRECT ROLLOVER of a Series of Payments. If you receive a payment that can be rolled over to a traditional IRA or another qualified employer plan that will accept it, and it is paid in a series for less than ten years, your choice to make or not make a DIRECT ROLLOVER for a payment will apply to all later payments in the series until you change your election. You are free to change your election for any later payment in the series.

III. PAYMENT PAID TO YOU

If your payment can be rolled over under part I above and the payment is made to you in cash, it is subject to a 20% income tax withholding. The payment is taxed in the year you receive it unless, within 60 days, you roll it over to a traditional IRA or another qualified employer plan that accepts rollovers. If you do not roll it over, special tax rules may apply.

Income Tax Withholding:

Mandatory Withholding. If any portion of your payment can be rolled over under Part I and you do not elect to make a DIRECT ROLLOVER, the Plan is required by law to withhold 20% of that amount. This amount is sent to the IRS as income tax withholding. For example, if you can roll over a payment of \$10,000, only \$8,000 will be paid to you because the Plan must withhold \$2,000 as income tax. However, when you prepare your income tax return for the year, you must report the full \$10,000 as a payment from the Plan. You must report the \$2,000 as tax withheld, and it will be credited against any income tax you owe for the year.

Sixty-Day Rollover Option. If you receive a payment that can be rolled over under Part I, you can still decide to roll over all or part of it to a traditional IRA or another qualified employer plan that accepts rollovers. If you decide to rollover, *you must contribute the amount of the payment you received to a traditional IRA or another qualified plan within 60 days after you receive the payment.* The portion of your payment that is rolled over will not be taxed until you take it out of the traditional IRA or the qualified employer plan.

You can roll over up to 100% of your payment that can be rolled over under Part I, including an

amount equal to the 20% that was withheld. If you choose to rollover 100%, you must find other money within the 60-day period to contribute to the traditional IRA or the qualified employer plan, to replace the 20% that was withheld. On the other hand, if you roll over only the 80% that you received, you will be taxed on the 20% that was withheld.

Example: The portion of your payment that can be rolled over under Part I is \$10,000, and you choose to have it paid to you. You will receive \$8,000, and \$2,000 will be sent to the IRS as income tax withholding. Within 60 days after receiving the \$8,000, you may rollover the entire \$10,000 to a traditional IRA or a qualified employer plan. To do this, you roll over the \$8,000 you received from the Plan, and you will have to find \$2,000 from other sources (your savings, a loan, etc.). In this case, the entire \$10,000 is not taxed until you take it out of the traditional IRA or the qualified employer plan. If you roll over the entire \$10,000, when you file your income tax return you may get a refund of part or all of the \$2,000 withheld.

If, on the other hand, you rollover only \$8,000, the \$2,000 you did not rollover is taxed in the year it was withheld. When you file your income tax return you may get a refund of part of the \$2,000 withheld. (However, any refund is likely to be larger if you roll over the entire \$10,000.)

Additional 10% Tax If You Are under Age 59½. If you receive a payment before you reach age 59½ and you do not roll it over, then, in addition to the regular income tax, you may have to pay an extra tax equal to 10% of the taxable portion of the payment. The additional 10% tax generally does not apply to (1) payments that are paid after you separate from service with your employer during or after the year you reach age 55, (2) payments that are paid because you retire due to disability, (3) payments that are paid as equal (or almost equal) payments over your life or life expectancy (or your and your beneficiary's lives or life expectancies), (4) dividends paid with respect to stock by an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) as described in Code section 404(k), (5) payments that are paid directly to the government to satisfy a federal tax levy, (6) payments that are paid to an alternate payee under a qualified domestic relations order, or (7) payments that do not exceed the amount of your deductible medical expenses. See IRS Form 5329 for more information on the additional 10% tax.

Special Tax Treatment If You Were Born before January 1, 1936. If you receive a payment that can be rolled over under Part I and you do not roll it over to a traditional IRA or other qualified employer plan that will accept it, the payment will be taxed in the year you receive it. However, if the payment qualifies as a "Lump Sum Distribution," it may be eligible for special tax treatment. (See also "Employer Stock or Securities", below.) A lump sum distribution is a payment, within one year, of your entire balance under the Plan (and certain other similar plans of the employer) that is payable to you *after* you have reached age 59½ or because you have separated from service with your employer (or, in the case of a self-employed individual, after you have reached age 59½ or have become disabled). For a payment to be treated as a lump sum distribution, you must have been a participant in the plan for at least five years before the year in which you received the distribution. The special tax treatment for lump sum distributions that may be available to you is described below.

Ten-Year Averaging. If you receive a lump sum distribution and you were born before January 1, 1936, you can make a one-time election to figure the tax on the payment by using "10-year averaging" (using 1986 tax rates). Ten-year averaging often reduces the tax you owe.

Capital Gain Treatment. If you receive a lump sum distribution and you were born before January 1, 1936 and if you were a participant in the Plan before 1974, you may elect to have the part of your payment that is attributable to your pre-1974 participation in the Plan taxed as long-term capital gain at

a rate of 20%.

There are other limits on the special tax treatment for lump sum distributions. For example, you can generally elect this special tax treatment only once in your lifetime, and the election applies to all lump sum distributions that you receive in that same year. If you have previously rolled over a distribution from the Plan (or certain other similar plans of the employer), you cannot use this special averaging treatment for later payments from the Plan. If you roll over your payment to a traditional IRA, you will not be able to use special tax treatment for later payments from the traditional IRA. Also, if you roll over only a portion of your payment to a traditional IRA, this special tax treatment is not available for the rest of the payment. See IRS Form 4972 for additional information on lump sum distributions and how you elect the special tax treatment.

IV. *SURVIVING SPOUSES, ALTERNATE PAYEES, AND OTHER BENEFICIARIES*

In general, the rules summarized above that apply to payments to employees also apply to payments to surviving spouses of employees and to spouses or former spouses who are “alternate payees.” You are an alternate payee if your interest in the Plan results from a “qualified domestic relations order,” which is an order issued by a court, usually in connection with a divorce or legal separation. Some of the rules summarized above also apply to a deceased employees’ beneficiary who is not a spouse. However, there are some exceptions for payments to surviving spouses, alternate payees, and other beneficiaries that should be mentioned.

If you are a surviving spouse, you may choose to have a payment that can be rolled over as described in Part I, paid in a DIRECT ROLLOVER to a traditional IRA or paid to you. If you have the payment paid to you, you can keep it or roll it over yourself to a traditional IRA but you cannot roll it over to a qualified employer plan. If you are an alternate payee, you have the same choices as the employee. Thus, you can have the payment paid as a direct rollover or paid to you. If you have it paid to you, you can keep it or roll it over yourself to a traditional IRA or to another qualified employer plan that accepts rollovers.

If you are a beneficiary other than the surviving spouse, you *cannot* choose a direct rollover, and you *cannot* roll over the payment yourself.

If you are a surviving spouse, an alternate payee, or another beneficiary, your payment is generally not subject to the additional 10% tax described in Part III, even if you are younger than age 59½.

If you are a surviving spouse, an alternate payee, or another beneficiary, you may be able to use the special tax treatment for lump sum distributions, as described in Part III. If you receive a payment because of the employee’s death, you may be able to treat the payment as a lump sum distribution if the employee met the appropriate age requirements, whether or not the employee had 5 years of participation in the Plan.

HOW TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This notice summarizes only the federal (not state or local) tax rules that might apply to your payment. The rules described above are complex and contain many conditions and exceptions that are not included in this notice. Therefore, you may want to consult with a professional tax advisor *before* you take a payment of your benefits from MERS. Also, you can find more specific information on the tax treatment of payments from qualified retirement plans in IRS Publication 575, *Pension and Annuity*

Income, and IRS Publication 590, *Individual Retirement Arrangements*. These publications are available from your local IRS office, on the IRS' Internet Web Site at www.irs.gov, or by calling 1-800-TAX-FORMS.