

Background Information on State Patrol Retirement Plan and Retirement Coverage for BCA Lab Employees

1. State Patrol Retirement Plan

The State Patrol Retirement Plan was established in 1943, (Laws 1943, Ch. 637) and initially provided retirement coverage solely for state highway patrol troopers. Currently, the State Patrol Retirement Plan provides retirement coverage for four distinct groups of law enforcement officers, the State Patrol Division of the Department of Public Safety, the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension of the Department of Public Safety, the Enforcement (Game Wardens) Division of the Department of Natural Resources, and the Gambling Enforcement Division of the Department of Public Safety. Separate retirement plans were established for game wardens (the Game Wardens Retirement Plan) in 1955 and for Bureau of Criminal Apprehension agents and officers (the State Police Retirement Plan) in 1961. The State Police Retirement Plan absorbed the Game Wardens Retirement Plan when it was created in 1961. In 1969, the State Police Retirement Plan was merged into the State Patrol Retirement Plan. In 1990, law enforcement officers in the Gambling Enforcement Division of the Department of Public Safety were added to the State Patrol Retirement Plan. With the exception of a small number of data processing personnel in the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension who were grandparented into the plan in 1987-1988, all members of the State Patrol Retirement Plan are peace officers licensed by the Peace Officers Standards and Training Board.

As a public safety employer pension plan, the State Patrol Retirement Plan pays larger retirement annuities, disability benefits, and survivor benefits than a general employee retirement plan and has an earlier normal retirement age for the retirement annuity. Because of these benefit plan differences, the plan typically has a greater actuarial cost and greater member and employer contributions than a general employee retirement plan. As law enforcement officers, members of the State Patrol Retirement Plan are not covered by Social Security under both state and federal law for their state law enforcement employment.

The policy reason for having a more lucrative benefit program for public safety employee retirement plans is that public safety employment (police officer or firefighter service) is particularly hazardous, that it requires the maintenance of a particularly vigorous and robust workforce to meet the strenuous requirements of the employment position, and that the normally expected working career of a public safety employee will be significantly curtailed as a consequence of the hazards and strenuous requirements of that type of employment when compared to a general public employee. Public employee pension plans are intended to assist the governmental personnel system by encouraging the recruitment of qualified and motivated new employers, the retention of able and valued existing employees, and the orderly and predictable out-transitioning of employees at the expected end or normal conclusion of their working career. For public safety employees, public safety employee retirement plans provide more lucrative benefits to assist in the recruitment and retention of new and existing personnel, but most clearly emphasize the out-transitioning function.

2. Retirement Coverage for Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Lab Employees

Employees of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) of the Department of Public Safety initially (1961) were members of the State Police Retirement Plan. The State Police Retirement Plan absorbed the separate Game Wardens Retirement Plan upon its creation in 1961 and was merged into the State Patrol Retirement Plan in 1969.

From 1961 to July 1, 1978, all crime bureau officers were included in public safety employee pension coverage, either the State Police Retirement Plan or the State Patrol Retirement Plan. In 1978, following the creation of the Peace Officers Standards and Training Board and the licensure of police officers, retirement coverage for BCA employers by the State Patrol Retirement Plan was generally limited to those employees who are licensed police officers. The exceptions are BCA officers hired before July 1, 1978, even though they are not licensed police officers, and Department of Public Safety data processing managers who were BCA officers with State Patrol Retirement Plan coverage on August 15, 1987, and who were hired in the data processing management position in September 1987 or January 1988.