

# SCPP Study: High-Risk Job Classifications (Preliminary Summary of Findings)

## Issue

In 2012 the Legislature passed 2ESB 6378 (Chapter 7, Laws of 2012, First Special Session). Among other provisions, this bill modified Early Retirement Factors (ERFs) for newly hired employees in the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), and the School Employees' Retirement System (SERS). It also required the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) to study two things.

- ❖ High-risk job classifications.
- ❖ Classroom Employee ERFs.

This report responds to the mandate to "study high-risk job classifications that entail high degrees of physical or psychological risk, or result in elevated risks of injury or disablement for older employees for inclusion in the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System (PSERS)." This version of the executive summary discusses preliminary findings and presents a possible framework for decision-making to fulfill the study mandate in 2ESB 6378. The issue paper\* will be updated as the study progresses to include additional information and, where appropriate, conclusions and additional findings.

\* The preliminary issue paper can be accessed on the SCPP [website](#).

## Policy Questions

The study mandate raises the following key policy questions.

- ❖ Are current retirement eligibility requirements appropriate for older employees working in high-risk or high stress jobs?
- ❖ Should pension policy be adjusted in response to potential risks of older employees working in high-risk or high stress jobs?
- ❖ If so, how should they be adjusted and for which employees?

## Preliminary Summary Of General Findings

- ❖ Not all workplace risk is the same. Risk varies by type and severity.
- ❖ Risk in various occupations may shift and change over time.

## Preliminary Summary Of Occupational Stress Findings

- ❖ Sources of stress can vary by individual and occupation.
- ❖ Job conditions can lead to stress. Some conditions include but are not limited to: Interpersonal relationships; work roles; environmental conditions; career concerns; and the design of tasks.
- ❖ Isolating stress due to occupation is difficult.
- ❖ Occupational stress can lead to increased overall health risk.
- ❖ Occupational stress occurs more frequently in white collar occupations.

## Preliminary Summary Of Physical Risk Findings

- ❖ The impacts of aging on work performance vary by individual.
- ❖ Older workers have lower overall injury rates
  - ◇ However, they experience longer time loss when injured.
  - ◇ Also, older workers have higher workplace fatality rates.
- ❖ State health care facilities and state hospitals have the highest total compensable injury rates compared to all public employees.\* The injury rates for these agencies are higher than PSERS, LEOFF, and WSPRS occupations.

*\*Rates for other groups is being developed by staff. It is likely that detailed injury rate data for PERS, TRS, and SERS will be available for the October 16, 2012, SCPP meeting.*

## Policy Highlights

- ❖ PSERS has more generous early retirement and disability benefits than PERS, TRS, and SERS; which could be one reason why certain groups seek inclusion in PSERS.
- ❖ The state has existing policies regarding lower retirement ages for certain high-risk occupations.
- ❖ Lowering retirement age does not necessarily eliminate all physical and psychological risk for older employees. However, it will likely reduce exposure.

- ❖ There are many ways to address concerns over job risk both inside and outside the pension system, including options available to members under current law.
- ❖ Improving benefits for employees in high-risk occupations will likely create long-term contractual rights to those benefits which cannot be easily undone if job risks change in the future.
- ❖ Ultimately, determining appropriate retirement age for employees in high-risk/stress jobs is a balancing act between employee and employer needs and affordability.
- ❖ PSERS membership may be evaluated on the basis of job duties or job risk. Expanding membership on either basis carries separate policy implications.

## Committee Activity

The SCPP was briefed on the passage of the bill and the bill's main provisions at the meeting on May 15, 2012.

Staff presented the preliminary study plan and study approach at the meeting on June 27, 2012.

At the September 18, 2012, meeting, staff presented policy considerations of using pension policy to address concerns over job risk in older employees.

## Next Steps

At the October 16, 2012, SCPP meeting, staff will likely present detailed injury rate data and additional discussion on policy options. At that time, policy makers may wish to select certain positions or job classifications to analyze in more detail or take no further action.

## Attachment

Department of Labor & Industries total compensable claims injury rate data.

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High-Risk Job Classifications  
(Preliminary Summary of Findings)

Total Compensable Claims  
Rate per 10,000 FTE

Class	Description	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
720100	State Government: Health Care Facilities	1,147.6	1,196.0	1,297.4	1,055.1	1,101.1	1,299.4	1,117.0	1,196.8	1,331.3	1,255.1
720000	State Govt: Hospital with Sph							1,112.4	1,038.6	1,125.9	1,084.4
690400	Cities and Towns: Salaried Firefighters	513.1	863.3	862.1	973.6	1,011.5	881.0	921.8	892.7	792.9	847.0
150100	Counties and Taxing Districts, All Other Employees, N.O.C.	531.4	701.1	745.0	774.7	696.0	662.6	662.0	677.3	633.0	653.6
610411	Schools, N.O.C. - All Other Employees		166.1			68.3		163.7	110.0	348.2	620.7
150101	Housing Authorities, All Other Employees, N.O.C.	778.7	840.8	638.9	770.2	591.9	750.2	601.9	506.5	538.5	588.4
080300	Cities and Towns, All Other Employees, N.O.C.	516.4	730.8	716.5	684.2	633.2	582.7	576.5	525.3	518.3	541.6
530701	State Government - Juvenile Rehabilitation Custody at DSHS									163.6	505.9
610312	Athletic Officials, N.O.C. - Amateur Sports	449.1	540.7	521.4	423.3	831.9	385.5	545.8	467.3	276.1	481.9
690401	Counties and Taxing Districts: Salaried Firefighters	388.1	380.4	429.7	378.2	451.3	513.5	471.2	466.2	482.6	480.9
610401	Schools: Academies. K-12 - All Other Employees	380.2	491.6	497.9	525.0	355.7	416.1	397.1	391.4	387.3	460.4
710303	State Government: Guards or Correctional Officers	469.7	451.4	391.9	484.3	480.4	518.5	494.0	485.1	470.4	453.6
530700	State Government, N.O.C.	424.5	408.2	415.4	410.9	413.2	395.9	364.3	373.9	381.9	433.6
710301	State Government: State Patrol Officers	497.7	500.4	561.5	592.5	624.8	842.4	531.3	463.9	486.7	419.2
710306	State Government: Fish and Wildlife Officers	503.6	1,277.2	621.6	153.6	529.9	508.1	299.3	477.2	482.2	405.0
690500	Cities and Towns: Law Enforcement Officers	295.4	394.3	346.6	373.0	440.1	437.1	358.1	351.3	347.8	342.2
610405	Museums, N.O.C. - All Other Employees	136.0	180.5	266.6	258.7	57.3	246.8	238.7	392.3	311.5	324.4
610403	Libraries, N.O.C. - All Other Employees	289.9	290.5	197.7	400.1	747.8	187.3	433.2	244.4	484.3	319.0
150109	Military Base Maintenance, N.O.C.	373.3	593.9	422.2	353.5	260.9	188.3	357.9	389.9	144.0	301.8
690501	Counties and Taxing Districts: Law Enforcement Officers	320.7	288.3	363.7	298.8	288.2	303.4	262.3	376.2	200.2	295.1
710300	State Government: Law Enforcement Officers, N.O.C	141.3	231.1	207.7	250.5	203.0	313.8	312.1	381.4	395.8	259.3
610402	Schools: Trade or Vocational - All Other Employees	211.1	388.0	462.0	135.2	196.5	305.8	259.9	353.3	116.5	233.1
610404	Churches - All Other Employees	208.2	197.7	86.5	258.2	151.4	230.2	221.8	187.2	173.8	141.9
490200	State Government: Professional and Clerical	78.4	76.1	88.7	75.5	79.1	77.4	69.5	70.2	79.3	75.6
530000	State Gov - Admin Field Staff							70.3	60.0	53.5	69.0
610301	Schools: Academic, K-12 - Professional and Clerical	53.7	65.7	55.2	76.5	50.9	59.5	50.9	64.5	56.3	63.2
610303	Libraries, N.O.C. - Professional and Clerical Employees	80.3	99.8	94.3	83.2	85.9	85.1	72.8	75.9	77.3	59.0
610302	Schools: Trade or Vocational, N.O.C., Professional and Clerical Employee	57.0	89.3	33.5	46.6	62.3	51.9	54.5	65.8	41.4	39.9
610311	Schools, N.O.C. - Professional and Clerical Employees	124.0	67.0	36.6	78.7	62.7	52.4	86.9	63.1	71.4	38.6
530607	Counties and Taxing Districts: Clerical Office and White-Collar Employee	40.6	45.5	59.4	42.8	37.1	48.3	35.9	27.9	17.2	35.3
610305	Museums, N.O.C. - Professional and Clerical Employee	46.0	23.7	37.8	12.9	37.7	61.2	22.1	63.1	11.2	33.7
530506	Cities: Clerical Office and White Collar Employees	47.8	59.5	57.5	45.8	42.5	38.9	43.7	42.0	39.0	29.8
610304	Churches - Professional and Clerical Employees	38.1	26.8	39.1	32.2	38.3	38.1	38.0	21.6	36.8	20.2
530626	Housing Authority: Clerical Office and White-Collar Employees	89.3	65.4	94.3	71.0	112.8	30.0	38.9	74.7	53.9	17.7
150108	Indian Tribal Councils, All Other Employees, N.O.C.		431.7	515.2							
610310	Flight Instructors - Classroom Only	105.4	54.7	182.1	292.4					85.9	
530627	Military Base Maintenance: Clerical Office and White-Collar Employees						98.4	73.1		145.6	

<b>Class</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
610400	Schools: Public, Academies - All Other Employees, N.O.C.	0.7									
610300	Schools - Academic/Public, Professional and Clerical Employees	0.3	0.4								
530625	Indian Tribal Councils: Clerical Office and White-Collar Employees										
710305	State Government: Lottery Officers										