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Email the LookOut Staff



LookOut Archives

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Calendar**August**

State Employees Board Meeting	10
International Left-Handers Day	13
ORS Golf Outing	15
ORS Picnic	22
National Banana Split Day	25

September

DMB Employee Recognition Day	14
Public School Employees Board Meeting	14
State Employees Board Meeting	21

And the survey says...

... ORS retirees continue to be happy with our services.

The overall satisfaction rate for retirees has remained above 90 percent for the last several years. With the exception of the Judges Retirement System, the latest retiree survey showed even higher rankings than the previous survey. By system, public school retirees rated satisfaction at 94 percent; state employees at 93 percent; state police and judges at 92 percent.

Additional highlights of the survey:

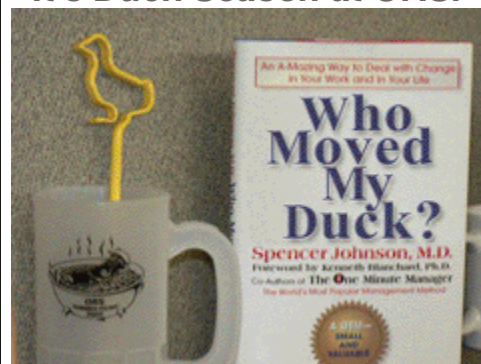
- Overall satisfaction with insurances for public school, state, and state police retirees all showed a positive improvement from the previous survey.
- More public school, state, and state police retirees felt the messages on their warrant and EFT statements were useful (compared to the January 2005 survey).
- Retirees rating the *Connections* newsletter as helpful rose for all four systems (compared to the January 2005 survey).
- The overall rating (combining all 4 systems) for helpfulness of the ORS website rose from 63.9 to 87.2 percent between January 05 to March 06.

The March survey was delivered to 400 retirees from each system; the overall response rate was over 51 percent. In addition to the statistical information, retirees gave us useful comments and suggestions, as well as thanks to staff.

Congratulations to all in ORS who work so hard to serve our customers. Your dedication shows!

For more information regarding the survey results, ask your BPO.

It's Duck Season at ORS!



Are you actively planning for your own retirement? The *Are Your Ducks in a Row?* survey last week set off a yellow feathered flurry of duck sightings in ORS. Ducks are showing up everywhere. Become a duck hunter by emailing the ORS-LookOut@michigan.gov when you spot one of these yellow fellows in an unusual spot. As an FYI, over 80 percent of our survey responders said they were contributing to a 401(k) or 457 plan. Just goes to show most of us aren't ducking our future!

On the Horizon

- Fall All-Staff Meeting
October 24

Quick Links

- [ORS Member Website](#)
- [ORS Employer Website](#)
- [Policies and Procedures](#)

Commonly Used Acronyms

AST	Application Support Team
BLA	Business Leadership Assembly (<i>Consists of the EPC, BPOs, and BPLs</i>)
BPD	Benefit Plan Design
BPL	Business Process Leader
BPO	Business Process Owner
CED	Customer Education and Development
CSC	Customer Service Center
DIT	Department of Information Technology
DMB	Department of Management and Budget
EPC	Executive Process Council (<i>Chris, Laurie, Phil, Tim, Anthony, and Kathy</i>)
EPO	Executive Process Owner
ER	Employer Reporting
ORS	Office of Retirement Services
PRIM	Preretirement Information Meeting (<i>public school employees</i>)
PRO	Preretirement Orientation (<i>state employees</i>)
PS	Process Support
T&T	Tools and Technology

Calling all team players

The Fall 2006 All Staff Planning Team is currently seeking volunteers. Team members should enjoy event planning, working as a team, and having lots of fun. Exciting challenges are waiting for you!

As a member of the planning team, you will contribute no more than 20 hours, and will have the opportunity to take part in many new and exciting activities outside your "normal" job duties. You will have the opportunity to lead meetings, brainstorm for ideas, and much more!

If this sounds like a good fit for you, please let your supervisor know by the end of the day on August 16. Supervisors will submit your name(s) to the CED planning team representative who will ensure that each process has at least one representative.

Clarety enhancements coming soon

The T3 team will soon be deploying Release 18, which promises some exciting new features and fixes that should further streamline our services. The release is expected to run next Tuesday—watch for an update and a description of the enhancements in the *Changing Times* early next week.

Clarety

August 2006 Retirement Times

Employer Reporting and Customer Education and Development are pleased to announce the publication of the [August 2006 issue of Retirement Times](#).

Articles in this issue include:

- Get Ready for Fall Member Statements
- Earnings Limit Waiver Changed by PA 158
- Using Wage Code 11 for Coaches
- Retroactive Wage Reporting
- TDP Interest Posted on July 1
- New Hire/Rehire Checklist
- Retirement Reporting Seminar Survey
- Employer Survey Coming Soon

Please take a moment to look over the newsletter. If you have comments or suggestions for future issues, please click on the newsletter feedback link at the top of the newsletter.

Retirement Times is published four times a year to inform public school reporting units about changes, tools, and tips that can simplify their reporting and help them prepare for upcoming events.



Comings & Goings

Welcome **Janet Wesner**, a new member of the CSC team and a 2005 graduate of Central Michigan University. Janet has studied

2006-2007 Open Insurance Enrollment



Dates for the 2006-2007 open insurance enrollment are August 14 - 31. All changes are effective October 8.

[Click here for more information from the Employee Benefits Division.](#)

art and psychology and will begin graduate school at Andrews University to further pursue her psychology degree. Janet is the mother of two, enjoys her two cats, and lives in an old farmhouse near St. Johns and Fowler. In her spare time she enjoys reading science fiction or mysteries, dyeing silk, weaving, and painting.

BPD is on the move! Congratulations to **Sandy Ball** who will serve as interim BPL for BPD. **Deb Lawrence** is currently handling DC "stuff" while **John Davidson** is on leave. And congratulations to **Lisa Kalchik**; she accepted the administrative hearings position.



Janet Wesner

PS says goodbye to **Erica Cooper** whose last day is August 4.

The ORS Golf Outing is just a dog-leg away ...

If you are planning to participate in this year's ORS Golf Outing on August 15th, you only have a few days left to get your team together. Teams must pay in full no later than Wednesday, August 9th. If you want to enter a team, please contact Fred Covert or Bill Motz as soon as possible. Remember, details regarding the outing may be viewed at: [F:\ORS\2006 ORS Golf Outing](#).



Swift-Tuttle Perseids

Some people live in fear of things unlikely ever to happen. For example, astronomers think the catastrophic event that ended the age of the dinosaurs was precipitated by Earth's collision with a speeding comet, or maybe an asteroid. The collision's impact wobbled the earth out of its celestial groove enough to lower its average temperature, hence freezing the big lizards.



In 1862, at the beginnings of the American Civil War, two astronomers, Lewis Swift and Horace Tuttle, spied a speeding object hurtling through space. The six-mile-wide comet did not, of course, hit the earth. However, its tail passed right through the imaginary line we call earth's orbit.

Every year—in late July and early August—the earth passes through the dust and debris left behind by the Swift-Tuttle comet in its 120-year jaunt around the sun. The passage can be spectacular and isn't likely to be too dangerous. It's known as the Perseids meteor shower.

In 1862, Swift and Tuttle calculated that their comet's orbit around the sun would take 120 years. In 1982, astronomers were prepared to view a comet that ultimately didn't show. The comet Swift-Tuttle was nowhere to be seen. In 1992, however, Swift-Tuttle was rediscovered.

Why the discrepancy? Was there some mathematical flaw in Swift and Tuttle's calculations?

Probably not.

[According to an information leaflet published by the Royal Greenwich Observatory:](#)

"When a comet passes near to the Sun, some of its matter is evaporated by the Sun's radiation. This evaporation does not necessarily happen symmetrically, but can act rather like a variable rocket motor attached to the comet, causing non-symmetrical forces that distort its orbit in unpredictable ways."

In other words, the comet speeds up and/or slows down and calculations made by astronomers cannot be used to accurately determine where the comet is going to be at any given time.

But that doesn't keep astronomer Brian Marsden from making predictions. In the early 1990s, Marsden predicted that Swift-Tuttle would hit the earth in 2026. His prediction, since dismissed, caused a stir and spawned the 1998 movie *Deep Impact*. Other astronomers have predicted that a collision with Swift-Tuttle will occur in 2126 and 3044.

According to the Royal Greenwich Observatory again:

"The chance of a collision would be very small even though the Earth does pass through the orbit of the comet. The comet will be moving at a speed, relative to the Earth of 60 kilometers per second. This means there is only a time of a few minutes during which the collision is possible."

While we're waiting for the argument to be settled, we can grab a lawn chair and watch thousands upon thousands of "mini" collisions.

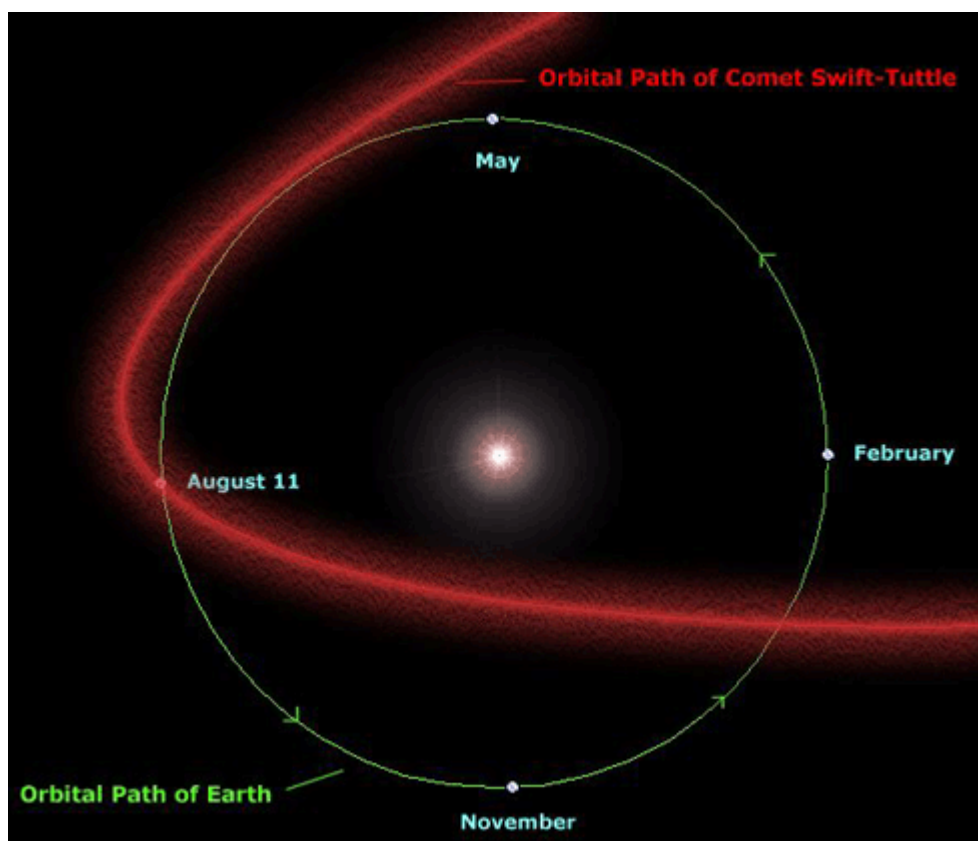


Photo courtesy of Space.com.

PERSEIDS FACTS :

What: Perseids Meteor Shower

Where: Look toward the northeast just before dawn. The meteors will seem to be

emanating from the constellation Perseus.

When: The peak of the meteor activity will occur at dawn on Friday, August 11, though meteors can be seen in the night sky during late July – early August.

Why: The meteor shower is a result of the Earth passing through the debris left behind by the comet Swift-Tuttle.

How: We see the meteor shower when rocks, from the size of a grain of sand to the size of a grain of a small pebble, are pulled into earth's atmosphere. Friction caused by the entrance into the atmosphere causes the rocks to burn up and flash across the sky.

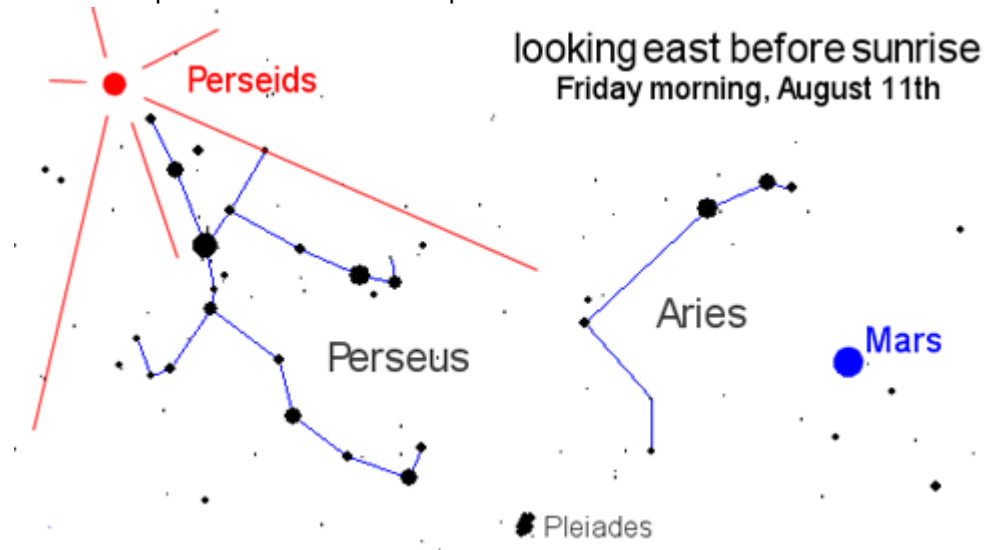
Who: People in the northern hemisphere can see this meteor shower.

ORS Mission:
We deliver pensions, related benefits, and services to promote the future financial security of our customers.

ORS Vision:
Fast, easy access to complete and accurate information and exceptional service.

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Thanks for reading!!



Note: Because some of the links in this newsletter point to resources within ORS, some of the links may not work if you are outside of ORS.