

EMPLOYER Outreach



OHIO PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM

www.opers.org

Employer-oriented seminars: Innovative offerings for 2009

Employer Outreach has revised, revamped and renovated the 2009 seminars for employers. Employers will find Web-based offerings, audience specific seminars and a wider array of locations and times.

Of course, the option for one-on-one training and teleconferencing still exists for those who prefer.



All employers received a poster suitable for posting in your worksite.

Take a close look at what's available in April and May. Complete details are available via the Web site at www.OPERS.org. Sign on now and then sign up.

Retirement Plans and Service Credit: Detailed data for employers

April 21	Upper Sandusky Community Library
April 30	Akron-Summit County Public Library
May 7	Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Oregon Branch

Retirement Overview for Employers: The overview course every employer should have

April 16	Coshocton Public Library
April 28	Miami University Middletown Campus
May 12	Web based— New
May 21	City of Celina Central Service Building

Employer Contribution System (ECS): Everything you wanted to know, but were afraid to ask

April 16	Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Washington Branch
May 7	Ashtabula Public Library
May 21	Columbiana Public Library

OPERS Reporting for New Administrators: This GPS on OPERS reporting will keep you on track

April 23	Stark State College
May 5	Ohio University—Chillicothe
May 14	Pickaway County District Public Library (Main)
May 19	Jefferson Community College

Seminar for Large Employers: Does one size fit all? Find out!

April 14	Perry County District Library, New Lexington
May 26	Miami University, Middletown Campus
May 28	Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Waterville Branch

Seminar for Libraries: Check it out...

April 21	Geauga County Public Library, Geauga West Branch
May 5	Upper Sandusky Community Library
May 19	Wayne County Public Library

Seminar for Townships and Villages: Small but mighty

April 14	Troy-Miami Public Library
May 26	Ashtabula Public Library
May 28	Rhodes State College

FIRST
QUARTER
2009

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Some employers have already taken advantage of the 2009 enhancements. In February, two seminars tailored for large employers were offered.

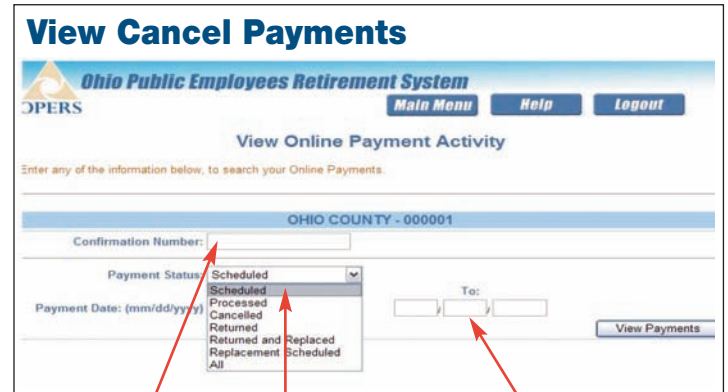
Looking for a record? ECS gives you search options

OPERS strives to enhance the employer's experience in reporting information to the retirement system. In response to your input, the Employer Contribution System (ECS) was recently enhanced to provide employers new ways to find and retrieve information previously submitted.

Here's an overview of available search options on ECS, by page:



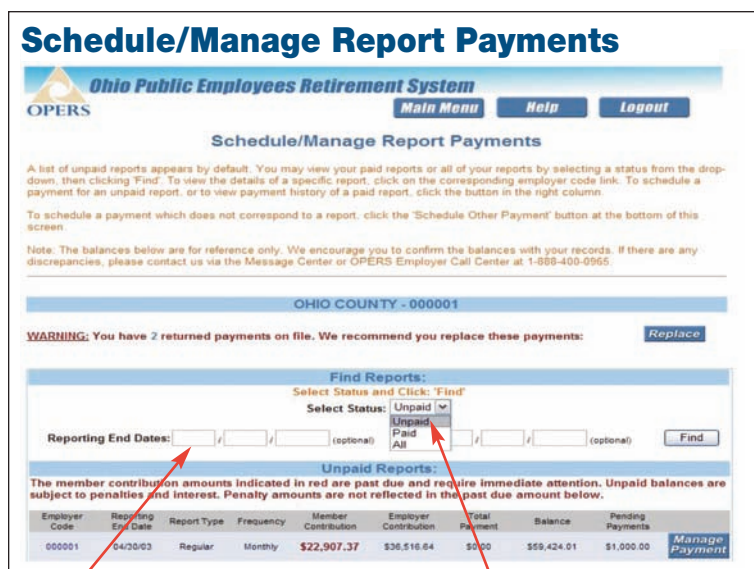
Search By Reporting End Date



Search By Confirmation Number

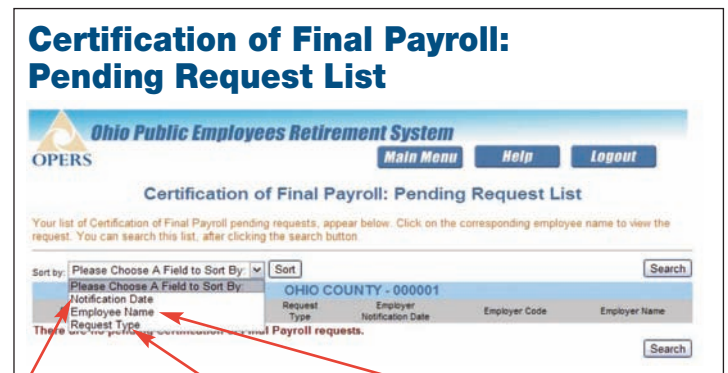
Search By Payment Status

Search By Payment Date Range



Search By Reporting End Date

Search By Status: Unpaid, Paid and all



Search By Notification Date

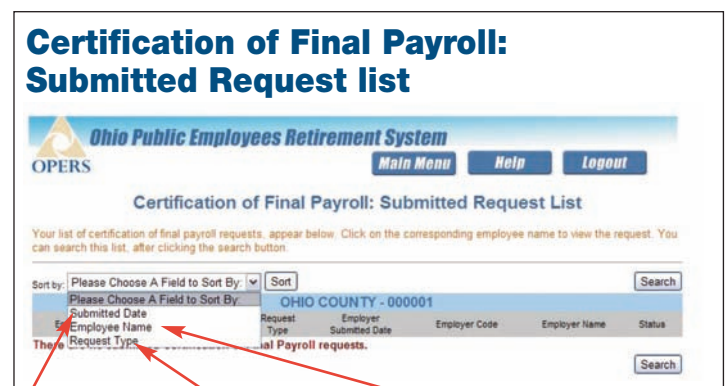
Search By Request Type

Search By Employee Name



Search By Form Submitted Date

Search By Form Type



Search By Submitted Date

Search By Request Type

Search By Employee Name

Social Security numbers

Feedback from recent employer focus groups indicates that employers would like the ability to search for submitted forms by employee Social Security number (SSN), especially for the two online forms: the *Alternative Retirement Plan Eligibility Notice (ARP-2)*, for university and college employers, and the *Personal History Record (PHR)*. While the ability to sort by SSN is not currently available the request has been noted and will be considered for future upgrades.

Employer Honor Roll: Employers Joining Paperless Payments

October 2008 – February 2009

Mirroring the national trend, many OPERS-reporting employers are going paperless. The national statistics are impressive; reports show a 15% decline in checks paid by banks since 2004. Paperless payments are secure, cost effective and easy to use. Here's a list of employers already realizing cost efficiencies by going paperless.

Brooks-Yates Center Diversified Oppt Carryovers
 Union Township Clermont County
 Village of Glenmont Holmes County
 Village of Arlington Heights Hamilton County
 Ashtabula County Airport Authority
 Eastern Ohio Regional Wastewater Authority
 Chester Township Wayne County
 Village of Cuyahoga Heights Cuyahoga County
 Tiffin Twp Defiance County
 Village of Florida Henry County
 Chesterfield Township Fulton County
 Village of Uniopolis Auglaize County
 Brownhelm Township Lorain County
 Raccoon Township Gallia County
 Union Township Logan County
 Village of Minerva Stark County
 Normal Memorial Library
 Village of Valley Hi Logan County
 Clay Township Knox County
 Ashtabula County Port Authority
 Kate Love Simpson Public Library
 Claridon Township Geauga County
 Tri-Valley Fire District

Newport Water and Sewer District
 Pleasant View Union Cemetery
 City of Tipp City Miami County
 Village of Enon Clark County
 Village of Gettysburg Darke County
 Ironton Port Authority
 Spencer Township Lucas County
 Claibourne Township Union County
 Henderson Memorial Public Library
 City of Lorain Lorain County
 Village of Brady Lake Portage County
 Village of Wren Van Wert County
 Granville Public Library
 Village of Craig Beach Mahoning County
 Perry Township Franklin County
 Village of Woodlawn Hamilton County
 Village of Chickasaw Mercer County
 Coshocton County Airport Authority
 Paint Township Madison County
 Delhi Township Hamilton County
 Perry Township Muskingum County
 City of Kent Portage County
 Meigs Township Muskingum County
 Mideast Ohio Council-of-Governments

Village of Rocky Ridge Ottawa County
 Bowling Green State University
 Jackson Township Clermont County
 Village of Forest Hardin County
 Kent State University
 Village of Seville Medina County
 Southwest Mercer Fire District
 Lafayette Township Coshocton County
 Village of Zaleski Vinton County
 St Clair Township Columbiana County
 Village of Montezuma Mercer County
 Whitewater Township Hamilton County
 Standing Rock Cemetery
 Milford Township Butler County
 Village of Deshler Henry County
 Huron County
 Vienna Township Trumbull County
 Fayette Township Lawrence County
 City of Vermilion Erie County
 Greene Metropolitan Housing Authority
 City of Maple Heights Cuyahoga County
 Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library
 Perry Township Allen County
 Quad Ambulance District
 Fredericktown Recreation District

Thinking of going paperless? A quick look at this chart may help convince you. Here's your at-a-glance comparison of the three payment methods employers use. The choice is clear if you're looking for cost savings, security, control, accuracy and efficiencies...

Paperless Payment vs. Traditional Paper Payment Comparison of Advantages

	ECS Paperless Payments	Paper Check	Wire Transfer Payments
Is it cost-efficient?	YES ACH items scheduled through ECS are at no charge to the employer; however, the average cost for an ACH debit item is about \$.06.	No The expense associated with managing a paper check can be in excess of \$20 per check.	No Wire transfer is the most expensive method of moving money electronically. The cost of originating a wire can range from \$15-20 per item.
Can I control when the payment comes out of my account?	YES ECS allows you to determine the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exact amount, Debit date, and Account from which your funds are made available to OPERS. 	Sometimes Debits in transit can present a reconciliation issue as well as limit your available cash.	Sometimes Aside from internal procedures and controls, wire transfers typically do not require additional time for clearing and or settling.
Is my payment secure?	YES Funds are transmitted from account to account via a secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP) encrypted file.	Sometimes Items sent via US Mail are subject to damage, being lost or misplaced and, unfortunately, fraudulent activity.	Yes Wires may be originated by the user in a secure banking environment augmented by user ID, password and secure key, or by submitting a request to your bank.
Will my payment be processed in a timely fashion?	YES Real-time confirmation is automatically provided for each scheduled transfer.	No Processing can be delayed 2-5 days depending on US Mail delivery, internal mail delivery & business hours.	Yes Typically, confirmation of the requested wire transfer can be provided by your bank.
Do I have flexibility in submitting my payment?	YES Payments can be entered on the payment due date or scheduled for future dates.	Sometimes Disbursement of paper checks frequently require multiple signatures for approval, or availability can be limited due to authorized signer limitations.	Yes Wires can be scheduled in advance but most are originated on demand.
Is it user-friendly?	YES ECS contains prompts to provide you with important information to be considered prior to completing the payment. You also retain the ability to cancel a submitted payment up until a specific time on the payment date.	No More traditional than friendly. Checks require a physical signature of some sort, are prone to fraud and are costly and difficult to recall in the case of error.	Sometimes Wires are typically originated by contacting your bank and making the request. Or, they may be created via a secure access portal. Pre-approved templates allow for increased usability and pre-approval.

Seeking information? Take a peek at OPERS.org

When you're looking for answers and information about all things OPERS, take a look at the Web site. Chances are, the information you want is there. However, sometimes the vast amount of information found via the Web site can be somewhat daunting. Here's an overview of what you'll find on the OPERS Web site—and a few pointers on how to find what you're looking for.

Here's what the OPERS home page looks like.

Remember that OPERS has three main audiences: members, employers and retirees. Most employers are also members. Depending on what hat you're wearing when you visit the Web, you'll want to click on the section most likely to have the information you're seeking.

You can also find OPERS information sorted by topic.

Here's the search engine —

and it will search all sections for you to find the information you want.

Looking for a form?

You'll find the most recent edition of any form just by clicking one of these buttons.

This is where you'll find what's new and you can click to see the information in its entirety.

Here are quick informational bits; you'll always want to scan this to see what's new at OPERS.

The Employer section can be accessed for particular items if you know what you're looking for, or you can go to the Employer section and browse. Click on Employers and you'll see....



Here's the Employer section home page.

The latest communications from Employer Outreach are found here. We're hoping you'll check in at least once a week to see what's new—and to make sure you're receiving all the information you need to make your job rewarding.

You can always be in the know by accessing these general press releases.



The search engine is also available from the Employer home page.

The search engine for you to select from the Employer section.

If you need one or 100, you can print or order any OPERS form from these buttons.

New this year!

Employers now have an Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) Plan section. Employers can download the ERI manual, forms, and the ERI estimating software. Note: the forms can be completed online and then printed to be signed and dated.

If you know what you're looking for, click on any one of these topics to get specific information or you can access the information via the site map.

This column gives you even more access to information.

- Find the latest *Employer Notices* and newsletters.
- Keep up with Employer Seminars (and register online as well).
- Learn all about online reporting and payments via ECS.

And, of course, you can always find a real live person at the Employer Call Center.

Spend a few minutes with the site and you'll quickly find your favorite way to access the information you need and want. Once you know it, you'll find it to be a valuable job aid.

Employer Manual changes

The following *Employer Manual* pages/sections have been revised for minor grammatical changes and corrections. If you maintain a print copy of the manual you will need to print these pages to update your manual: page 2.14, 6.1 entire Section 5 and the General Table of Contents.

New and noteworthy: Enhancements for employers

This is advance notice to employers for new and upcoming changes that will help streamline your retirement reporting processes—saving you time and making your job more rewarding. Take a look:


New and already available is...

- Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) Plan section on the Employer Section of the Web site. The ERI section gives you:
 - ❖ Instant access to the ERI-specific manual,
 - ❖ Ability to complete ERI forms online for printing and completion, and
 - ❖ Immediate access to the ERI estimating software.

Coming soon...Watch for more information coming your way on...

- *Employer Payment Remittance Advice* (E-3) will be available online via ECS. With this enhancement, the Remittance Advice will be pre-populated with information

from your monthly contribution report and employer account. You'll have the ability to finalize the form online—even if you are not yet participating in paperless payment—so your exact instructions about your remittance can be executed by OPERS. To take advantage of this enhancement, you must be reporting via ECS. Online E-3 is expected to be available early second quarter.

- Masked employee Social Security numbers (SSNs) will be used by OPERS on outbound reports and informative letters. To help protect your employees from identity theft, OPERS will mask Social Security numbers on all hard copy information (print versions only), including pre-list contribution reports. Expected to be implemented early third quarter, the enhanced security measures will provide employers with the last four digits of the employee's SSN; the first five digits will be masked. Employee information sent via ECS, our secure communication channel, will continue to display the full Social Security numbers. 

Health Care Update

Changes slated for 2011

OPERS is constantly working to proactively position the Health Care fund for ongoing solvency. That solvency is critical so OPERS can continue to offer health care coverage—which is neither guaranteed nor mandated by law—yet important to the overall financial stability of our retirees.

As a part of the overall review of OPERS health care coverage, the Board of Trustees recently approved a modification to the health care eligibility rules. This change will affect eligibility for some spouses currently covered by OPERS health care, and will be effective as of January 1, 2011.

What's changing

On January 1, 2011, OPERS will no longer subsidize the monthly health care premium cost for a retiree's spouse if the spouse is under the age of 55. Retirees may continue to cover spouses under the OPERS health care plan, but the retiree will be responsible for the full health care premium. Once the spouse reaches age 55, the health care premium will again be subsidized.

Who's affected

This change affects retiree spouses when the spouse is under the age of 55, and who have OPERS health care coverage as:

The existing monthly premiums for health care coverage with Aetna are:

In 2009, the monthly premiums for spouses not yet eligible for Medicare:

Enhanced	Intermediate	Basic
\$820.91	\$656.73	\$492.54

Remember, these are listed here only as a guideline; costs will change for 2011.

- Non-Medicare eligible spouses of retirees who retired under an age-and-service retirement,
- Non-Medicare eligible spouses of retirees who have changed from a revised disability to a conversion retirement, and
- Covered spouses of survivor-benefit recipients who were grandfathered.

Some things remain the same


Some OPERS health care recipients under the age of 55 will not see a change. They include:

- Covered spouses of disability recipients,
- Covered dependent children,
- Covered spouses who are receiving a benefit as a surviving spouse of an age-and-service retiree (joint/survivor benefit),
- Covered surviving spouses of a deceased active member (survivor benefit), and
- Spouses enrolled in Medicare.

General costs

The cost of health care is important to everyone. The exact monthly cost to cover a spouse under the age of 55 in 2011 is not currently available. Monthly costs for 2009 have been provided as a guideline. Please note, this is a guideline only; the purpose in printing it here is to give employees plenty of time to plan for this change.

More information is always available

As you help your employees plan for retirement, remember that more information is always available. Employers and employees have access to experienced customer service representatives. In addition, a wealth of information is available via the OPERS Web site, www.opers.org. And, of course, as we work to prepare the OPERS membership for this change, more information will be forthcoming in OPERS newsletters. 

Mailbox

Here's an overview of the most-commonly asked employer questions

Q: What should I do if an employee on laid-off status submits a refund application?

A: Unless the employee has terminated employment, the refund application should not be certified by employers.

Q: How can I fix a Certification of Final Payroll if it has already been submitted?

A: You can invalidate a certification if the benefit has not already been finalized.

➤ **ECS-reporting employers should:**

- Access Online Reports within the ECS system, then
- Click on the Submitted Request List,
- Select the *Invalidate* button next to the certification,
- The employee's name should reappear in the pending list for you to resubmit.

➤ **Paper-reporting employers should:**

- Contact your Employer Outreach representative. We'll forward the corrected information to the appropriate benefits area within OPERS.

Q: How do I use my Account Credit Coupon?

A: The credit coupon is prefilled with the available credit amount. Remember, you can only use the credit amount toward payment of employer liabilities. To do this:

- List each employer liability separately on the coupon; make sure you show the type of liability you're paying, such as

employer contribution, delinquent contributions, billing, etc.

- Indicate the exact amount of credit you're applying against the liability.
- Include the credit coupon with your next payment to OPERS, or fax it to OPERS at 614-857-1138.

Q: I report electronically and complete the Certification of Final Payroll electronically as well. Why does my Report of Retirement Contributions get blocked when I'm reporting the final pay period for retiring employees?

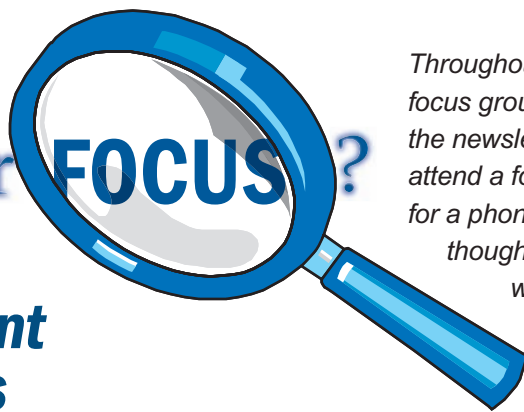
A: There are two potential reasons this might occur:

- The most likely cause is the Final Earnable Salary Date on the submitted certification doesn't match the Pay Period End date being reported for this employee on the *Report of Retirement Contributions*.
- Another common reason would be a missing Pay Period End code of P (for pensioned), showing the employee has retired.

Q: When I give an account number to OPERS for paperless payments, can I schedule payments to pay other vendors through ECS?

A: No. The paperless payment feature of ECS is secure and enables funds to be scheduled and transmitted from the bank account you provide to OPERS ONLY. No other vendors can be paid through the paperless payment feature of ECS.

What's your FOCUS?



Throughout 2009, employers will find the recap of employer focus groups and phone surveys presented in this section of the newsletter. Make sure your opinion counts; if invited to attend a focus group—accept and fully engage. When tapped for a phone survey, spend a few minutes ensuring your thoughts, concerns and suggestions are aired. OPERS wants, and needs, your input to make sure our initiatives are in focus.

Electronic student exemption forms

Recently, a focus group for the college/university employers was held. Among other topics discussed, input from this group revealed a strong preference for the *Request for Optional Exemption as a Student form* (form F-3) to be placed online for electronic completion and filing.

Employer Reporting got to work and sought additional input from OPERS' legal and data collection units. The result? We discovered this request cannot be acted upon because OPERS is required by law to have the student signature on the form. In this case, the virtual copy is not acceptable.

We recognize this creates paperwork for employers—just when we're trying hard to eliminate print copies of paperwork. However, please note that following the statute has the potential to save employers significant money in the future. Why? Well, if the student exemption paperwork cannot be produced at a future date when a member may want to buy back service credit, the employer is liable for the employer contributions, the employee contributions and the applicable interest. If the document can be produced, the member is responsible for the full cost of buying back the service.

Signature Required

Section 3 - Acknowledgment
I have reviewed this form and I choose an optional exemption from membership in OPERS as a student working at the public school, college, or university where I attend. I understand that I must become a member of OPERS if my employment does not meet the requirements stated on this form.

Student Signature: _____ Month Day Year

Section 4 - Certification by Payroll or Fiscal Officer
I, _____ Payroll or Fiscal Officer (print name), certify this employee is a student enrolled and attending this school. I understand if this request is approved by OPERS, this form will be stamped "APPROVED" and returned to this school. After the school receives the approved exemption, no deductions will be taken from the Student's or Ohio Revised Code Section 149.04.

Payroll or Fiscal Officer Signature: _____ Month Day Year
Name of school, college, or university: _____
Department: _____

WHEN APPROVED BY OPERS AND RETURNED, THIS BECOMES THE PERMANENT EMPLOYER COPY. DO NOT DESTROY. THIS IS THE ONLY COPY OF THIS EXEMPTION.

DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE - FOR OPERS OFFICE USE ONLY



Info to Go...

2009 limits for contributions and compensation

- Employers should note that the limit for contributions to defined contribution plans has increased from \$46,000 to \$49,000, or 100% of compensation, whichever is less. Both employee and employer contributions are included when calculating the maximum contribution threshold.
- The annual compensation limit for employees who became OPERS members on or after January 1, 1994 increased from \$230,000 to \$245,000.
- The annual compensation limitation for employees who were OPERS members before January 1, 1994, increased from \$345,000 to \$360,000.

Laws surrounding hiring retirees

Retirees offer a wealth of knowledge, but if you're hiring an OPERS retiree or a retiree from one of the other Ohio retirement systems, you need to be aware of the Ohio retirement law requirements:

- Employers must send contributions to OPERS for each re-employed retiree.
- OPERS cannot pay a retirement benefit to a retiree if he or she returns to the same employer under an "independent contractor" status.

- Re-employed retirees cannot waive health care coverage available through a public employer in favor of receiving OPERS-provided health care coverage. Ohio retirement law provides that a reemployed retiree shall receive primary health care coverage from the employer, if the employer provides coverage to other employees performing comparable work. The retiree's OPERS health care coverage is secondary to the coverage provided by the employer. A retiree may waive coverage offered by his employer; however, OPERS coverage will not be primary or secondary for the retiree unless the retiree has other primary coverage (through a spouse, for example).
- When an employee retires and is rehired, the employee must first experience a two-month separation from service. Otherwise, they will forfeit those two months of benefit payments.
- An employee is not considered to be a retiree until the first day of the month following the last date of service.
- An employee cannot return to work and be considered a re-employed retiree until the first day of the month following the last date of service. (Caution: see benefit forfeiture provision above.)

Detailed information is available for employers on the OPERS Web site at www.opers.org, by typing *re-employed retirees* into the search engine, or by accessing the Retirees Handbook. Either way, you'll find an array of information is available to you.

Correction...

The December 2008 edition of *Employer Outreach* listed The Ohio State University as having submitted almost 42,000 *Personal History Records* in 2008. That number is not accurate; although approximately 42,000 new accounts were created for new public employees in 2008 (meaning that number of PHRs were generated), that number represents all employers, not OSU alone.

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