



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Winter 2008

New Pension Administration System

By Jo Ann Mulvahill,
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PERS

The Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS)

of Mississippi, a governmental defined benefit pension plan qualified under Section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, is the retirement system for nearly all non-federal public employees in the state. PERS serves a customer base of more than 164,000 employees working in state government, public schools, universities, community colleges, municipalities, legislature, and highway patrol. The retirement system also provides retirement benefits to nearly 78,000 retirees monthly, totaling more than \$1.4 billion dollars annually in benefits.

Mississippi was one of the first public pension funds in the United States to convert from a mainframe system to a client server computing environment. During 1995 through 1999, PERS replaced its line-of-business (LOB) mainframe computer based system with a client server Windows based pension administration system called "Genesis". Genesis was developed in a 4th Generation Object Oriented Language called Forte and is supported by a Microsoft SQL relational database management system. This system has served PERS well; however, as technology changes, so do the needs and demands of customers.

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The Forte development environment is no longer a supported programming platform, as it does not support web enabled functionality and is very difficult to integrate with third party software. PERS is now embarking on a major project initiative with the goal of implementing a new pension administration system. The new pension system will be rich in browser-based and web-enabled self-service functionality, providing ease of use not only to PERS staff, but also to members, retirees, beneficiaries, and employers. The major components of the new system will include:

- ❖ Core LOB functions, which include the applications that permit the agency to perform all of its operations
- ❖ Integration of the pension administration system to PERS' existing financial management system and replacing all existing interfaces with state agencies, banks, etc.
- ❖ Support for the execution of all processes required in accordance with enabling

New Pension Administration System

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legislation, board policies, statutes, regulations, etc.

- ❖ Installation and configuration of a new Electronic Document Management System to replace PERS' existing imaging system
- ❖ Integration of imaging and workflow management, collectively also known as Enterprise Content Management or ECM, with the LOB solution
- ❖ Business Process Reengineering (BPR) of PERS' current business processes as necessary to increase processing efficiency and take best advantage of the LOB solution
- ❖ Web/Internet-based self-service functionality to improve access to PERS by members, retirees, and other appropriate stakeholders
- ❖ Replace and/or upgrade the necessary hardware and network infrastructure to support the new system

Cyber Security Tips

Provided by: Multi-State Sharing and Analysis Center

www.msisac.org



Knowledge-based authentication or the use

of "Challenge" or "Secret Questions" helps computer users access their accounts when they forget their passwords. The questions are often designed as simple, easy to remember "prompts" that only the authorized user should be able to answer. They are, in effect, a backup to your password.



While some systems allow users to create their own challenges or secret questions, most systems have pre-populated questions such as: "What is your mother's maiden name?", "What was the name of your first pet?", or "What is your favorite color?".

Questions like these are a great convenience, since the end user is not likely to forget the correct responses to such personal questions, and the practice is efficient from the administrator's perspective because it requires little overhead. But the use of these simple questions for restoring user passwords poses many concerns from a security perspective.

The pool of secret questions that most Knowledge-Based Authentication systems use is limited, and many of the questions have a limited number of potential responses. For instance, a little research (or just the process of elimination) could easily reveal the answer to a simple question like, "What is your favorite color?". Once the correct answer is discovered, the user's account is open to unauthorized access.

The ability for a hacker to correctly guess the response to a user's secret question has greatly increased due to the large volume of personal information available on the Internet. This was demonstrated during the recent presidential campaign when one of the candidate's email accounts was hacked into. The attacker was able to do so by conducting a minimal amount of research about the candidate using information found on the Internet to answer the secret questions and get the password for the email account.

Cyber Security Tips

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Users need to be aware that there is a tremendous amount of information available about them, not only through Internet search engines, but also through social networking profiles and other sources.

What can be done to make “Challenge” or “Secret Questions” more secure? Since the response to a challenge or secret question is, in effect, a password, many of the same practices used to create a strong password apply. The key is to develop a methodology that is easy for the user to remember, but difficult for someone else, even an acquaintance, to guess.

The use of a combination of upper and lower case letters, special characters, and numbers is also recommended. Each response could begin and/or end with a number, capitalized letter, or special character as part of the answer. For example, if the response to “What is your mother’s maiden name?” is “Smith”, then “44SmitH!” could be used. Another example would be to insert a number and special character in the middle of the word. In this example, the response could be “Smi44!th”.

Users are also encouraged to provide technically incorrect responses to these questions. For example, the name of a city could be used as the response to “What is your mother’s maiden name?”.

Another tactic is to provide answers that do not correspond to the question, thus making it difficult for an attacker to correctly guess the answer. The question itself can even be used to create an easy-to-remember passphrase. By combining the main part of the question with a favorite catchword, a memorable passphrase can be created.

For instance, if the question asks for the user’s favorite sports team, “Sports Team” from the question can be combined with a phrase from a favorite show, such as “CSI”. The answer then becomes “Sports Team CSI”.

Users should periodically search the Internet to discover what personal information about them is freely accessible. A user’s name is an easy place to start the search.

*For additional information regarding
“Challenge” or “Secret Questions”*

Please visit:

www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-002.html

www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST05-012.html

www.owasp.org/index.php/Using_Secret_Questions

Manufacturer EPL Website Pilot

By ITS Express Products List (EPL) Team

For many years, ITS has maintained the product and pricing data in-house on all items proposed and included on the Micro EPL. The FoxPro Data Entry System and the EPL Interactive System used to collect and display this data are difficult to maintain and require a great deal of processing by both the vendors and the EPL Team.

Now ITS has established a Manufacturer

Vendors can refresh their products at will ...

EPL Website Pilot as an alternative quote tool for the

Manufacturer EPL Website Pilot

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Micro Express Products List 3502. Manufacturers that are approved to sponsor a “Reseller Group” on the Micro EPL may optionally choose to create a special Mississippi Micro EPL page on their website instead of housing their product and pricing information on the ITS EPL Interactive Site.

Our customers can look up products and pricing and work with the individual manufacturers and resellers to obtain quantity discounts and any special configurations on these Manufacturer EPL Websites, just as they have always done on the original EPL Interactive System. Purchase orders can be issued based on the EPL pricing or on related quotations from the manufacturer or a member of the Manufacturer’s Reseller Group.

Vendors can refresh their products at will, without additional approval from ITS, so prices may fluctuate up and down more frequently. Vendors are obligated to immediately pass along any price decreases, and if a price goes up, vendors must honor any quoted lower prices for at least thirty days.

As with any new offering, there will be a learning curve for ITS, the vendors, and our customers. ITS and the vendors are trying to make these websites as user friendly as possible. Customers are not required to establish a password or go through any special login procedure. Each vendor’s site will link to the ITS EPL Interactive System and the ITS EPL Interactive System will link back to the participating vendors’ Manufacturer EPL Website. Presently, we already have a few vendors participating in this program, but we expect there will be many more.

For additional tips and instruction on using the Manufacturer EPL Websites:

Visit the ITS Website

www.its.ms.gov/EPL/interactive-tips.pdf

Email the EPL Team

eplteam@its.ms.gov

or

*Telephone the Procurement Help Desk
601-576-HELP (4357)*

Online Telecom Services Website

*By Debbie Britt, CPM
Special Projects Manager, ITS*



ITS is pleased to announce the release of our new Online Telecom Services Website (ots.its.ms.gov). The new website will provide agencies with anytime digital access to monthly invoices as well as other essential reporting information. The new website will provide our customers with reporting, viewing, and printing capabilities, and the ability to export historical and management information as it relates to an agency’s monthly telephone and data network billing. The new website also provides access to an agency’s invoice in two different viewing formats.

One is called the Complete Invoice and is the agency’s entire invoice in pdf format. The other is called the Drill Down Invoice, which has numerous hyperlinks within the invoice to allow quick access to the various sections.

Online Telecom Services Website

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Other reports are also available such as the Cost Center, Calling Card, Auth Code, and Usage reports. These reports may be downloaded in a variety of electronic formats including Adobe PDF, Microsoft Word, HTML, Crystal Reports, Rich Text, Text, and Excel, giving an agency the ability to verify usage, track circuit and equipment inventory, and check for abuse/fraud in an easier and more efficient manner.

During the initial phase of this project, agencies will continue receiving paper copies of the Telecom Services invoices, as well as having access to this new website. However, after full implementation and training is complete, ITS will no longer provide paper invoices to the agencies.

A staff member from the Telecom Services Division of ITS will be contacting agency telecom coordinators to obtain the basic information needed to correctly set up user accounts and also to provide instructions on accessing the website.

Once authorized users are set up, each user will have full viewing, printing, and exporting capabilities for invoices and reports on the website.

ITS strives to provide the best service at the least cost, and hopes you will find this service beneficial. We look forward to working with you during this transition.

*For additional information regarding the
Telecom Services Website (ots.its.ms.gov)*

*Contact: Susan Lightsey at
601-359-6560*

Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) Filing System

*By Sylvia Knight, CPM, PMP
Chief Information Officer, MSOS*

The Mississippi Secretary of State's Office (MSOS)

is statutorily mandated to administer the Mississippi Corporation Law, the Uniform Commercial Code, the state's trademark and servicemark laws, service of process, and issuance of notary commissions. The Business Services Division (BSD) of the MSOS is responsible for filing all documents relating to business formation and also serves as the official filing officer for documents required under the Uniform Commercial Code. Mississippi adopted the Revised Article Nine of the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) in 2001. The UCC and Corporate filing system currently utilized by the MSOS' BSD has reached the end of its life cycle and no longer provides the functionality required to meet the needs of the division.

The BSD is seeking a replacement system which must administer, at a minimum, the statutorily required filing and application functions described above, namely: enhanced online filing functionality with features that will encourage use by the public, the ability to interface with the state's E-Government portal, and allow redaction of sensitive information. Other business related documents legislatively mandated to be filed with the division are limited in volume and frequency of filing, but will require imaging and storage and must be available for searching purposes.

MSOS will select a software solution that utilizes state of the art technology and provides for:

Uniform Commercial Code

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- ❖ A high technical level of development to increase system life expectancy
- ❖ A high level of system security
- ❖ An accounting interface
- ❖ A document management system
- ❖ The scheduling of tasks
- ❖ User defined and managed business rules
- ❖ A web interface which can function independently of the primary MSOS website
- ❖ Document search capabilities via both internal application and Internet web interface
- ❖ Rejection and acceptance processing of documents
- ❖ Verification and examination of documents at various stages prior to acceptance or rejection
- ❖ Redaction of certain information contained in the documents using both system automation and user initiated
- ❖ Downloading of documents and lists based on subscription services
- ❖ Shopping cart functionality
- ❖ Correspondence with filers and other parties, both internally and externally, via US mail and email

In addition, the selected solution is expected to offer workflow tools, executive dashboards, and predefined and customized reporting capability with web services technology.

Data Services' Application Hosting Services

*By Mike Hatch
Systems Manager, ITS*

Recent increases in server capacity and advances in virtual operating systems have allowed ITS to offer a cost effective alternative to agencies for open systems platform hosting.

- ❖ ITS hosts websites, applications, and databases within a protective and secure environment with UPS and generator backup.
- ❖ ITS provides IIS and WebSphere based Web Hosting with full DNS services for all ms.gov sites.
- ❖ The primary databases used in hosting services are DB2 and SQL Server.
- ❖ ITS provides backup and recovery service for hosted services.

This offering allows agencies to grow applications without increasing the agencies' internal infrastructure costs.

*For additional information regarding
Data Services hosting services*

*Contact: Kemper Porter at
kemper.porter@its.ms.gov
or
601-359-2804*

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