



DIGEST

Around and About

DRIVERS OF County-owned vehicles have a surer hand on the wheel than they used to. The County Automotive Safety committee reports they had 1,378 accidents in 1975-76 (the last year with complete figures), a rate of 1.79 accidents per 100,000 miles driven. Three years earlier, they had 1,572 crackups and a rate of 2.21 accidents per 100,000 miles. The sheriff's department, which rolls up almost a third of County fleet mileage, made one of the best showings—35 percent reduction in accidents in 1975-76.

THE HEALTH services department has opened blood donor centers in four hospitals and is urging County employees to visit them and donate blood. The action results from a new state law (SB 410) which prohibits using paid donors. The centers are at County-USC med center (call 226-7143 for an appointment), King hospital (603-4253), Harbor General (328-2380, ext. 1303), and Olive View med center (997-1800, ext. 454.)

A NATIONWIDE talent search is under way to find a candidate for a new County director of parks and recreation. Seymour Greben resigned Aug. 6.

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PAY BOOSTS SHOW UP IN CHECKS

COUNTY PAYCHECKS today (Sept. 23) will show an increase for most employees, reflecting salary boosts granted in the 50 memoranda of understanding (MOUs) approved by the Board of Supervisors last month after lengthy negotiations between unions and County management.

Auditor-controller Mark Bloodgood estimated 90 percent of County workers will get larger paychecks today, with the remaining 10 percent receiving increases as soon as required data can be fed into the County's check-writing system.

Meanwhile, the data processing department and Bloodgood's office are continuing to calculate amounts due each employee as retroactive pay since July 1—the date when most MOUs provided that salary increases should become effective. Bloodgood said he expects these one-time lump sum payments to come in late November.

CAO Harry Hufford informed the Board of Supervisors that salary boosts averaged 5.35 percent; when fringe benefits are included, the costs are 6.2 percent higher than in 1976-77. However, a rollback in retirement benefits for new employees and reduced salary guarantees under worker's compensation for victims of future job-related injuries will cut 0.4 percent from personnel costs, down to 5.8 percent more than last year.

Unrepresented classes—that is, employees belonging to no bargaining unit—received salary increases which, with adjustments for inequities, averaged 5.8 percent.

All MOUs were for two-year terms except for one-year agree-

ments signed by both firefighter units and the operating engineers two-year contracts provide that in unit, and Unit 801 of attorneys. The second year, 1977-78, salary increases shall equal 70 percent of the preceding year's increase in the U. S. consumer price index, with a minimum rise in pay of 4 percent (5 percent for peace officers) and a maximum increase of 7.5 percent.

The pharmacists unit had a continuing contract that was not open for negotiation this year.

Two units, the dental professionals and administrative peace officers, did not reach agreement with management and negotiations with them continue.

Step increase change

This year's MOUs contain, for the first time, a section on step increases—the system under which employees who come to work for the County receive annual 5.5 percent pay increases (in addition to any general rise) until they reach the fifth and highest step for their position.

Until now these step increases have been largely automatic. The new MOUs require a job performance rating of "competent" or better before granting a step increase.

Other provision in the new MOUs:

To extend the bilingual pay bonus to employees using American sign language

To end the County severance pay program Jan. 1 when the County enters an unemployment compensation plan

To increase rentals paid by employees living in County-owned

(Continued on page 2)

Health Plans Open Enrollment Coming

THE COUNTY, under its newly approved memoranda of understanding, will continue to provide fully paid health insurance through its Kaiser, Ross-Loos, Blue Cross, and Blue Shield plans. The ceiling for County subsidy remains, as it has been, the rate for Blue Cross family coverage (\$103.58 a month in 1977-78). If Blue Cross increases the cost of family coverage next year, the County will raise its subsidy ceiling by as much as \$5 a month, or to \$108.58. Any amount over \$108.58 the employee must pay.

Open-enrollment periods for health plans, nonexistent in recent years, will return, with the first one next month, Oct. 3 through 14. Another open-enrollment period will take place in autumn 1978. During open enrollment, any permanent, fulltime County employee may enroll in any County health plan or may shift from one plan to another.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield have raised their reimbursement for a semi-private hospital room from \$60 a day to \$100 a day—this for the first 14 days. After that the health plan pays full cost of the room. A room in the intensive care unit continues to be fully paid.

Dental plan unchanged

THE COUNTY in the new MOUs has agreed to maintain the fully paid Blue Cross dental plan, for employees only, for the next two years. The County will absorb the cost of \$7.21 a month per employee, which is 32 cents a month higher than in 1976-77. Under the plan, an employee, after paying a \$25 a year deductible charge, may be reimbursed for 85 percent of the cost of fillings and other dental treatments, and 50 percent of the expense of dentures and bridges. The employee also may get two teeth cleanings a year and receive 85 percent reimbursement without regard to the \$25 deductible charge.

NEW MOU'S

(Continued from page 1)

housing. These 75 units are occupied by dam operators, road shop superintendents, deputy sheriffs, corrections officers, park rangers, and others in eight departments.

Workers' comp

The County, under its workers' compensation program for employees injured on the job, has been paying the injured employee 100 percent of his salary for up to a year while he is recovering. The new MOUs reduce this compensation to 75 percent of salary for up to a year.

The reduction applies only to workers injured on or after the effective date of the change, Sept. 16. The change does not affect safety employees who are covered by state law.

Chief deputy personnel director Herbert Kaplan reported that on any given day more than 1,000 County employees are off duty recovering from job-connected in-

juries. About a third of these are safety employees.

Retirement rollbacks

The MOUs rescind, for newly hired employees, several liberalizing changes adopted by the Board of Supervisors for the County retirement system in recent years.

The major revision means that new hires will pay about 50 percent of their retirement contribution (as all employees did until July 1975), with the County putting in the remaining 50 percent. Other employees will continue to contribute about 25 percent as they have since mid-1975.

Other reversions to previous practices that affect new employees include:

—Returning to the pre-1972 method of determining final compensation by averaging the three highest salary years instead of the present practice of using the single highest year

Eliminating the three-year acceleration for determining retire-

ment benefits that was instituted in 1976

—Reverting to the pre-1966 maximum of a 2 percent boost retirement allowance each year to offset higher cost of living. The present maximum increase of 3 percent a year will remain in effect for most employees when they retire.

Retirement board officials are assuming that the rollbacks will apply to County employees hired after Aug. 1, 1977, an assumption that has been affirmed by County counsel John Larson's office.

Savings from the rollbacks will increase each year as existing staffers leave County service and are replaced with employees under the reduced benefits plan, CAO Hufford advised the Board.

"We estimate savings will accumulate at the rate of \$1 million a year," Hufford said, "so that in 15 years, when a substantial proportion of employees are in the new plan, savings could exceed \$15 million a year."

Fits within budget

Hufford also assured Board members that the wage and benefits adjustments provided in the 50 MOUs can be financed from funds provided in the 1977-78 County budget that the Board adopted in June.

"The budget estimates for salary settlements were based on our intention to continue the Board's policy of scaling down the size of County government while maintaining a good labor relations environment," the CAO said. He added he was following the Board directive to reduce County staff by at least 2,000 permanent employees a year.

County of Los Angeles

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Editorial Office: Room 526, Hall of Administration, 222 North Grand Avenue, Los Angeles 90012
Telephone 974-2490