



Odie Donald, II MBA
Administrator

Date: October 6, 2021

To: Mayor Hardie Davis
Mayor Pro Tem Bobby Williams
Commissioner Jordan Johnson
Commissioner Dennis Williams
Commissioner Catherine Smith McKnight
Commissioner Alvin Mason
Commissioner Ben Hasan
Commissioner Sean Frantom
Commissioner Brandon Garrett
Commissioner Francine Scott
Commissioner John Clarke

From: Odie Donald II, Administrator 

Subject: Premium Pay FAQs + Cheat Sheet

Background

On August 19, 2021, the Augusta Commission approved a plan to provide supplemental and premium compensation benefits in compliance with the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Augusta Rescue Plan (ARP) based on certain criteria. The three approved actions are:

1. Payout of COVID 19 Vacation hours accrued
2. One-time premium pay amount to essential employees
3. Hourly wage adjustments and pay changes required to address compression caused by these adjustments

Following the announcement, the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) received a few emails and calls related to implementation. It should be noted that Augusta has chosen a posture of open service delivery, and is the only local jurisdiction of record to implement premium pay provisions and one other (DeKalb County) on public safety pay. The Governor's Office is one example of a program that provides a supplement for traditional public safety and first responders. Although the Governor's Office has announced the program ([Gov. Kemp Announces Bonus for Georgia Public Safety Officials and First Responders | Governor Brian P. Kemp Office of the Governor](#)), as of today it is not live, nor have the specifics been released. Once they are, we will apply to add yet another benefit for our eligible staff members.

While Augusta's categories and basis for providing the supplement is similar to the Governor's, our service deliver posture has allowed us to expand our initiative beyond that of like programs. In an effort to provide further clarity on who qualifies, and for which benefit(s), staff has

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provided an additional attachment that clearly signifies recipients. An update will also be provided for information purposes during the upcoming Committee cycle.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Question 1: What is the timeline for when the various payouts will be distributed?

- **October 8- COVID 19 vacation** payments will be received. This is a regularly scheduled pay date, and this payment will be separate from the employee's normal check.
- **October 22- One-time premium payment** \$2,500/\$1,250/\$500/\$250 will be received. This is a regularly scheduled pay date, and his payment will be separate from the employee's normal check.
- **November 19- Implementation of hourly wage adjustments.** This will be included in the employee's normal check.

Question 2: Will the amounts for the one-time COVID 19 Vacation and Premium payments be included on my W-2?

Yes. These payments are considered gross wages and as such are reported along with the employee's regular wages on their W-2.

COVID 19 VACATION PAYMENT

Question 3: What is the one-time Covid-19 Vacation Payout?

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commission lifted the cap on maximum hours that employees were able to accrue. When the cap was reinstated on March 6, 2021, those excess hours were placed in a separate leave pool. Those hours will now be paid to employees who have hours in that pool.

Question 4: What deductions will be taken from the COVID-19 vacation payment amount?

Required Federal and State taxes, FICA and Medicare deductions will be applied. As a lump sum vacation payment, no pension deductions will be taken nor are these wages used to calculate benefits earned.

Question 5: Can I leave my hours in the pool or add hours from my regular vacation hours?

No.

Question 6: Will this payment be "lumped in" with my regular paycheck?

No. The COVID 19 Vacation hours will be processed separately. Employees will receive a separate direct deposit or check depending on their current payment election.

Question 7: I have more than one bank account for my direct deposit. Where will the funds go?

The entire payment will be deposited into the primary account on the employee's record. The payment will not be split into multiple accounts.

ONE-TIME PREMIUM PAYMENT

Question 8: Who gets the one-time Premium Payment?

The City of Augusta has defined employees who will receive a one-time payment due to the Covid-19 pandemic as follows:

- Public Safety Personnel who serve in a non-clerical role:
 1. *One-time payment of \$2,500 to full-time first responders, 911 communication officers, and deputy coroners.* These offices and departments include:*
 - a. Augusta Georgia Fire Department
 - b. Richmond County Sheriff's Office
 - c. Richmond County Marshal's Office
 - d. Richmond County Correctional Institution
 - e. Augusta Regional Airport ARFF Department
 - f. Augusta 911 Emergency Services
 - g. Coroner's Office
 2. *One-time payment of \$1,250 to non-first responders, code enforcement officials, animal control officers, and part-time first responders.* These offices and departments include:*
 - a. Animal Services
 - b. Augusta 911 Emergency Services
 - c. Augusta Georgia Fire Department
 - d. Code Enforcement
 - e. Coroner's Office
 - f. Richmond County Marshal's Office
 - g. Richmond County Sheriff's Office
 - h. Richmond County Correctional Institution
- * Individuals serving in an administrative support or clerical role in a public safety department or office have been identified as other government personnel.
- Other Government Personnel include employees who regularly perform in-person work, interact with others at work or physically handle items handled by others. These individuals will receive the following:
 1. One-time payment of \$500 to other full-time employees
 2. One-time payment of \$250 to other part-time employees

Question 9: What deductions will be taken from the Premium payment amount?

Required Federal and State taxes, FICA, Medicare deductions, and pension deductions will be applied.

Question 10: Will this premium payment be “lumped in” with my regular paycheck?

No. The one-time premium payment will be processed separately. Employees will receive a separate direct deposit or check depending on their current payment election.

Question 11: I have more than one bank account for my direct deposit. Where will the funds go?

The entire payment will be deposited into the primary account on the employee’s record. The payment will not be split into multiple accounts.

Question 12: Did I have to be employed as of a certain date to qualify for the premium pay?

Yes. City of Augusta employees who qualify for any of these one-time payments were hired on or before August 19, 2021.

WAGE ADJUSTMENTS

Question 13: Will there be a change in pay rates?

- Providing supplemental pay via the ARPA and ARP provisions increases the minimum hourly rates to a minimum of \$15.00 per hour. ARPA funds are available through 2024 at which time administration and the Augusta Commission has publicly committed to fund permanently.
- Providing the hourly rate supplement affects employee salaries for Grades 1-11 and Fire Fighters Grades 13-20.