

97B.52 Payment to beneficiary.

1. If an inactive member who is vested by service, or any active member, dies prior to the member's first month of entitlement, the member's beneficiary shall be entitled to receive a death benefit equal to the greater of the amount provided in paragraph "a" or "b". If an inactive member who is not vested by service dies prior to the member's first month of entitlement, the member's beneficiary shall only be entitled to receive a death benefit, as a lump sum, equal to the amount provided in paragraph "a".

a. A lump sum payment equal to the accumulated contributions of the member at the date of death plus the product of an amount equal to the highest year of covered wages of the deceased member and the number of years of membership service divided by the applicable denominator. As used in this paragraph, "*applicable denominator*" means the following, based upon the type of membership service in which the member served either on the date of death, or if the member died after terminating service, on the date of the member's last termination of service:

(1) For regular service, the applicable denominator is thirty.

(2) For service in a protection occupation, as defined in section 97B.49B, the applicable denominator is the applicable years of service for the member as defined in section 97B.49B if the member had retired on the date of death.

(3) For service as a sheriff or deputy sheriff, as provided in section 97B.49C, the applicable denominator is twenty-two.

b. For a member who dies on or after January 1, 2001, a lump sum payment equal to the actuarial present value of the member's accrued benefit as of the date of death. The actuarial equivalent present value of the member's accrued benefit as of the date of death shall be calculated using the same interest rate and mortality tables that are used by the system and the system's actuary under section 97B.51, and shall assume that the member would have retired at the member's earliest normal retirement date.

c. The payment of a death benefit to a designated beneficiary as provided by this subsection shall be in a lump sum payment. However, if the designated beneficiary is a sole individual, the beneficiary may elect to receive, in lieu of a lump sum payment under this subsection, a monthly annuity payable for the life of the beneficiary. The monthly annuity shall be calculated by applying the annuity tables used by the system to the lump sum payment under this subsection based on the beneficiary's age. If the designated beneficiary is more than one individual, or if the designated beneficiary is an estate, trust, church, charity, or other similar organization, a death benefit under this subsection shall only be paid in a lump sum.

2. a. If the system determines, upon the receipt of evidence and proof, that the death of a member in special service was the direct and proximate result of a traumatic personal injury incurred in the line of duty as a member in special service, a line of duty death benefit in an amount of one hundred thousand dollars shall be paid in a lump sum to the special service member's beneficiary. A line of duty death benefit payable under this subsection shall be in addition to any death benefit payable as provided in subsection 1.

b. A line of duty death benefit shall not be payable under this subsection if any of the following applies:

(1) The death resulted from stress, strain, occupational illness, or a chronic, progressive, or congenital illness, including, but not limited to, a disease of the heart, lungs, or respiratory system, unless a traumatic personal injury was a substantial contributing factor to the special service member's death.

(2) The death was caused by the intentional misconduct of the special service member or by the special service member's intent to cause the special service member's own death.

(3) The special service member was voluntarily intoxicated at the time of death.

(4) The special service member was performing the special service member's duties in a grossly negligent manner at the time of death.

(5) A beneficiary who would otherwise be entitled to a benefit under this subsection was, through the beneficiary's actions, a substantial contributing factor to the special service member's death.

(6) The death qualifies for a volunteer emergency services provider death benefit pursuant to section 100B.31.

3. If a member dies on or after the first day of the member's first month of entitlement, the excess, if any, of the accumulated contributions by the member as of said date over the total gross monthly retirement allowances received by the member under the retirement system will be paid to the member's beneficiary unless the retirement allowance is then being paid in accordance with section 97B.48 or with section 97B.51, subsection 1, paragraph "a", "c", "d", or "e".

4. a. Other than as provided in subsections 1, 2, and 3 of this section, or section 97B.51, all rights to any benefits under the retirement system shall cease upon the death of a member.

b. If a death benefit is due and payable on behalf of a member who dies prior to the member's first month of entitlement, interest shall continue to accumulate through the quarter preceding the quarter in which payment is made to the designated beneficiary, heirs at law, or the estate unless the payment of the death benefit is delayed because of a dispute between alleged heirs, in which case the benefit due and payable shall be placed in a noninterest bearing escrow account until the beneficiary is determined in accordance with this section.

5. a. In order to receive the death benefit, the beneficiary, heirs at law, or the estate, or any other third-party payee, must apply to the system within five years of the member's death. However, death benefits payable under this section shall not exceed the amount permitted pursuant to Internal Revenue Code section 401(a)(9) and the applicable treasury regulations.

b. The system shall reinstate a designated beneficiary's right to receive a death benefit beyond the five-year limitation if the designated beneficiary was the member's spouse at the time of the member's death and the distribution is required or permitted pursuant to Internal Revenue Code section 401(a)(9) and the applicable treasury regulations.

6. Following written notification to the system, a beneficiary of a deceased member may waive current and future rights to payments to which the beneficiary would otherwise be entitled under section 97B.51, subsection 1, paragraphs "a", "b", and "e". Upon receipt of the waiver, the system shall pay the amount designated to be received by that beneficiary to the member's other surviving beneficiary or beneficiaries or to the estate of the deceased member, as elected by the beneficiary in the waiver. If the payments being waived are payable to the member's estate and an estate is not probated, the payments shall be paid to the deceased member's surviving spouse, or if there is no surviving spouse, to the member's heirs other than the beneficiary who waived the payments.

7. If a member has not filed a designation of beneficiary with the system, the death benefit is payable to the member's estate. If no designation has been filed and an estate is not probated, the death benefit shall be paid to the surviving spouse, if any. If no designation has been filed, no estate has been probated, and there is no surviving spouse, the death benefit shall be paid to the heirs as provided in this subsection. The system shall pay the full amount of a member's death benefits to those heirs who have presented a claim for such benefits within five years after the member's date of death. The system is not liable for the payment of any claims by heirs who make themselves known to the system more than five years after the date of death of the member. If a death benefit is not paid as provided by this subsection, the death benefit shall remain in the fund.

[C46, 50, §97.14 – 97.18, 97.39; C54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §97B.52]

84 Acts, ch 1285, §14, 15; 90 Acts, ch 1240, §38; 92 Acts, ch 1201, §51 – 54; 95 Acts, ch 102, §9; 96 Acts, ch 1187, § 45 – 47; 98 Acts, ch 1183, §50 – 54; 2000 Acts, ch 1077, §53 – 58; 2001 Acts, ch 68, §21, 24; 2002 Acts, ch 1135, §28, 37; 2003 Acts, ch 145, §286; 2004 Acts, ch 1103, §42 – 45; 2006 Acts, ch 1103, §2; 2008 Acts, ch 1032, §201; 2008 Acts, ch 1171, §38, 48; 2010 Acts, ch 1167, §32

Subsection 1, unnumbered paragraph 1 amended