

CHAPTER 350

AN ACT concerning accidental death benefits under the State Police Retirement System of New Jersey and amending and supplementing P.L.1965, c.89.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. Section 14 of P.L.1965, c.89 (C.53:5A-14) is amended to read as follows;

C.53:5A-14 Accidental death benefits; payment of health insurance premiums.

14. a. Upon the death of a member in active service as a result of an accident met in the actual performance of duty at some definite time and place, and such death was not the result of the member's willful negligence, an accidental death benefit shall be payable if a report of the accident is filed in the office of the Division of State Police within 60 days next following the accident, but the board of trustees may waive such time limit, for a reasonable period, if in the judgment of the board the circumstances warrant such action. No such application shall be valid or acted upon unless it is filed in the office of the retirement system within five years of the date of such death.

b. (1) Upon the receipt of proper proofs of the death of a member on account of which an accidental death benefit is payable, there shall be paid to the surviving spouse a pension of 70% of final compensation or of adjusted final compensation, as appropriate, for the use of that spouse and children of the deceased, to continue for as long as the person qualifies as a "surviving spouse" for the purposes of this act. If there is no surviving spouse or in case the spouse dies or remarries, 20% of final compensation or of adjusted final compensation, as the case may be, will be payable to one surviving child, 35% of final compensation or of adjusted final compensation, as the case may be, to two surviving children in equal shares and if there be three or more children, 50% of final compensation or of adjusted final compensation, as the case may be, will be payable to such children in equal shares.

If there is no surviving spouse or child, 25% of final compensation will be payable to one surviving parent or 40% of final compensation will be payable to two surviving parents in equal shares.

As used in this paragraph, "adjusted final compensation" means the amount of final compensation or final compensation as adjusted, as the case may be, increased by the same percentage increase which is applied in any adjustments of the compensation schedule of active members after the member's death and before the date on which the deceased member of the retirement system would have accrued 25 years of service under an assumption of continuous service, at which time the amount resulting from such increases shall become fixed and shall be the basis for adjustments pursuant to the Pension Adjustment Act, P.L.1958, c.143 (C.43:3B-1 et seq.). Any adjustments to final compensation or adjusted final compensation shall take effect at the same time as any adjustments in the compensation schedule of active members. The provisions of the Pension Adjustment Act shall not apply to any pension based upon adjusted final compensation other than the fixed pension in effect at the conclusion of the 25-year period.

(2) In the event of accidental death occurring in the first year of creditable service, the benefits, payable pursuant to this subsection, shall be computed at the annual rate of compensation.

c. If there is no surviving spouse, child or parent, there shall be paid to any other beneficiary of the deceased member, his aggregate contributions at the time of death.

d. In no case shall the death benefits provided in subsection b. be less than that provided under subsection c.

e. In addition to the foregoing benefits payable under subsection a. or b., there shall also be paid in one sum to the member's beneficiary, an amount equal to 3 1/2 times final compensation.

f. (Deleted by amendment.)

g. (Deleted by amendment.)

h. In addition to the foregoing benefits, the State shall pay to the member's employer-sponsored health insurance program all health insurance premiums for the coverage of the member's surviving spouse and surviving children.

C.53:5A-14.2 Applicability of adjustment in survivors' benefits.

2. The adjustment in survivors' benefits pursuant to this act, P.L.2001, c.350, shall apply to benefit entitlements granted prior to and in effect on the effective date of this act but only for benefit payments after the effective date of this act. No surviving spouse or surviving child of a deceased member of the retirement system shall be granted a retroactive payment based upon the difference between the benefit the person would have received if the adjustment pursuant to this act had been applicable at the date of entitlement and the benefit that the surviving spouse or surviving child has received from the date of entitlement to the effective date of this act.

3. This act shall take effect immediately but the adjustment provided for in this act shall not begin until the first benefit payment following the 90th day after enactment.

Approved January 6, 2002.