

**PREPARING FOR EMPLOYER SELF SERVICE:
Employer File Testing and Use of the Sandbox**

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Overview

MainePERS is getting ready to roll out the Employer Self Service (ESS) system. The ESS rollout is combination of a change in process along with minimal changes to the data reported. To prepare for the rollout MainePERS will require the submission of test files from EPF filers and a test paper report (meeting the new data requirements) from those employers currently reporting on paper but who will be entering their data online through ESS in the future. Additionally, a test system will be made available, called the “Sandbox” to allow employers the ability to login and become familiar with the features of ESS before its live release.

The instructions in this document provide the information necessary for employers and software providers to prepare for the test, create a test payroll, select the data to use for the test, and to name and submit those test files to MainePERS. Also, included in this document are the steps and goals of the Employer Sandbox.

Test Files or Test Paper Reports

The purpose of the testing is to ensure that a new file can be uploaded and pass validations. Key to the effort is changes to the Employer Payroll File (EPF) which should be implemented by the employer and tested as described herein. The changes to the EPF file are contained in the updated EPF manual that can be downloaded from the following location:

http://www.maineopers.org/Employers/ER_Self_Service.htm

Prerequisites for Submitting a Test

Prior to submitting a test payroll the following items should be considered:

- Employers understand the changes to the file (report)
 - New field values
 - Removal of GLI
- System changes have been made (for testing only; not for production use) that comply with the new EPF manual.

Schedule

MainePERS will begin accepting test files/paper reports and launch the ESS Sandbox on October 20, 2009. Where possible, the objective is for each employer to complete training and within seven days of its completion, submit a test file to MainePERS for testing, and then access the sandbox from their office to ensure connectivity and to review validation messages with MainePERS Employer Services Staff. As an example, if an employer completes training on October 20, MainePERS requests that they submit a test payroll by October 27. If meeting this schedule is not possible, the employer should contact MainePERS and provide an alternative schedule. Ultimately, MainePERS requests that all employers submit an EPF file or paper report by January 31, 2010, before the live release of ESS.

Test Data

A number of the validations that will be performed on your payroll data are based on member data already residing in the MainePERS membership database. Therefore, employers must submit “real” data as part of the test (Note: For payroll software providers this may require you to work with a pilot employer to perform initial testing). MainePERS has converted data into the test region through the end of August, 2009. This does not include the payroll report each employer would have reported for August. Therefore, employers have two options for providing a test payroll. Option 1 is the preferred method.

Option 1 – Reproduce the August 2009 payroll data (provided in September in Production) with the new requirements.

Option 2 – Provide a payroll filing for any period after August of 2009. The reason this is not the preferred option is because there have likely been changes to member contract information between August and the time you submit the test file that will not be reflected in the test environment. This will result in more errors and exceptions than if Option 1 were followed.

File Submission and Naming Conventions (EPF Filers Only)

Files must be transmitted using the current EPF upload process through the “EPF Login” link on the MainePERS website at http://www.maineopers.org/Employers/Employer_Mainpage.htm (NOTE: This method is for testing only and will not be the same method used when ESS goes live).

To ensure the file is not confused with a production file the test file should be named as follows:

The ASCII file name format will be EEEEEEMMYT.

EEEE, or EEEEE	Employer code assigned by MainePERS. The employer code assigned by the MainePERS may be either a five or six character code.
MM	Employer reporting month.
YY	Employer reporting year.
X	“T” for a test file.

Example:

TCPOR0110T. – Test file submitted by the Portland School Department for January of 2010.

Paper Report Submission (current paper reporters only)

Paper report tests will be submitted as they are in production. Please ensure that “ESS Test” is printed clearly across the top of the test submission.

EPF Testing Steps

1. MainePERS will pull the test file from the current EPF site and upload the file into ESS.
2. The Import process will validate that the file is in the proper format. If the file does not pass the import process (e.g. the file format is incorrect) MainePERS will contact the employer immediately.
3. If the file can be imported, each row (member record) will be validated further. MainePERS will evaluate the errors and provide feedback to the employer, and if necessary an additional test file will be requested.
4. If step three was successful, the employer will be able to login to the Sandbox and see the resulting validation messages that resulted in this process. A MainePERS representative will contact each employer at this stage to walk them through this process.
5. Once a MainePERS representative approves the test file, MainePERS records will be updated and testing is complete.

Paper Filer Testing Steps

1. MainePERS will evaluate the submitted test report.
2. MainePERS will report back to the employer if the report was acceptable, and if not, the changes required will be identified.

Sandbox

The Sandbox has been established to allow employers the ability to ‘surf’ the ESS site in a test environment before going live. This is a supplement to the hands on training that will be provided. The sandbox will include real data that was converted from the MainePERS legacy systems. An authorized user will only have access to data relative to their employer. User privileges to this site will be controlled by MainePERS and will be on a read-only basis.

Prerequisites for Using the Sandbox

Prior to accessing the Sandbox the following items should be considered:

- A representative at your employer has completed hands on training
- MainePERS has provided you with a user login
 - Contact MainePERS if you have been provided training and do not have an appropriate user login.
 - Contact MainePERS if you forget your password.
 - Only a single login will be provided, per employer
- It is recommended, but not required that Monitor Resolution be 1024 X 768 or higher
- The minimum system requirements in the table below

Component Name	Primary Recommendation	Comments
Browser Settings		JavaScript or client-side scripting should be enabled.
Monitor Display	Monitor resolution of 1024 x 768 or higher	
Browser Software	Internet Explorer 7, 8 Firefox 3	The Back and Refresh buttons are not supported in ESS. Allow pop-ups from the website where the application is hosted. Use 'Regular' or 'Normal' text size on your browser.
PDF Forms: Viewing	Adobe Acrobat Reader 9.x and higher	To install go to www.adobe.com or within a current version of Adobe navigate to >Help>Check for updates. Requires internet connection.
Document Shell Editor	Java Runtime Environment	To install on your desktop. go to http://java.sun.com/j2se/1.5.0/download.jsp and click on the Download JRE 5.0 Update X or Higher.

Schedule

MainePERS will launch the ESS Sandbox on October 20, 2009. Where possible, the objective is for each employer to complete training and within seven days of its completion, access the sandbox from their office to ensure connectivity and to familiarize themselves with the application. The Sandbox will be made available until approximately January 31, 2010. It should be noted that this is a Test System and any test system availability maybe limited and defects maybe evident. MainePERS will work to ensure the Sandbox is available Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If any other downtime is required messages will be posted on the MainePERS website where you will access the link to ESS.

Questions

If you have any questions, please contact the Employer Service at 1-800-451-9800 or by e-mail at Employer@MainePERS.org.