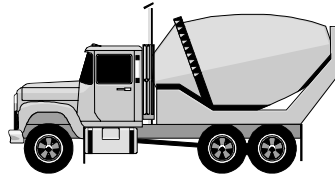


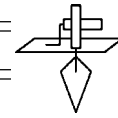
# The Cement



# Mixer

A Quarterly Newsletter for Northern California Cement Masons

Winter 2003 #21



## Why Change to the Hour Bank?



The short answer to “why change to the Hour Bank” is, “it was necessary”. Faced with double-digit rising health care costs and lowering returns on investments (remember, Health and Welfare is limited to short term investments which currently yield low rates of interest), the Trustees could no longer ignore the mounting deficit. The outflow of benefits far exceeded the inflow of contributions. Something had to be done.

**How will the Hour Bank help?** Before going into detail on the Hour Bank, let’s take a look at the prior eligibility requirements. To be eligible for a 6-month period, a Cement Mason needed to only work a minimum of 360 hours. That averages 60 hours each month. At the current contribution rate of \$5/hour, that works out to be \$300/month. With the average monthly cost for a Cement Mason in the Active Plan at \$660, there was a shortfall of \$360/month. The Trustees could no longer allow this to continue without taking measures to bring these two figures closer together.

The Fund’s Consultant determined that the average

Cement Mason works 136.2 hours per month. This average exceeds the new requirement of 100 hours for each month of eligibility. Plus it insures a monthly contribution to the health plan of \$500.

OK, so what does all this mean? It means that the average Cement Mason who works 136.2 hours/month maintains coverage for himself and his family as long as he continues working. Under the old eligibility rules, if a Cement Mason worked the minimum 360 hours, he had coverage for 6 months. This put a real strain on the average Cement Mason working 136.2 hours a month. Under the old rules, a Cement Mason could work a couple of months and have coverage for six months. The Trust Fund could no longer afford to carry these individuals.

As for the Hour Bank, you can maintain a maximum of 800 hours and continue to be eligible for benefits so long as you maintain a minimum balance of 300 hours. Your Hour Bank is like money in the bank. That 800 hours can carry you for 6 months, even if you do not work for whatever reason. If that reason is a disability, the Plan still grants disability hours.

### Reminder for Retired Cement Masons



On or about March 10, 2004, the Pension Trust Fund will be mailing the Annual Statement by Pensioner or Beneficiary. This statement is sent annually so that the Trust Fund can verify the status of each individual receiving a monthly benefit from the Pension Plan.

As soon as you receive the statement, complete, sign and return it to the Fund Office. Depending on the type of pension you receive, your signature may need to be notarized or witnessed by a Local Union official. Follow the instructions that accompany the statement. Remember, a delay in returning the statement by the date indicated could affect your monthly benefits.

**There are no notices inserted in this issue of the Cement Mixer.**





## Savvy Shoppers

Due to the rising cost of health care, individuals are having to educate themselves on how to be shrewd consumers. No longer can employees expect the employer to pick up the full tab for medical care. With 4 years of double-digit increases in medical costs, companies are turning to employees to share the cost. That involves a little consumer action on the part of the employee.

Take, for example, the cost of prescription drugs. Given a choice between a brand-name costing \$63.00 and a generic drug costing \$10.00, which would you choose? When it comes to out-of-pocket costs, the smart consumer chooses the lesser expensive drug that is as effective as the brand name.

Cement Masons can be shrewd consumers by choosing a generic over a brand name drug. How so? The co-payment for the generic drug is \$10.00; the co-payment for the brand name is \$10.00 *plus* the difference in cost between the generic and brand name. Depending on the drug, this difference can amount to a few dollars or, in some cases, hundreds. Of course, if there is no generic drug available, your co-payment is a flat \$10.00.

*Remember, you can help protect the assets of this health plan by being a smart shopper of health care services.*

### Know your benefits...

## Benefit Information in Spanish Información de los Beneficio en Español

What better way for our Spanish speaking Participants to understand the Plans' benefits than to read them in Spanish. In keeping with the purpose of this newsletter, which is "to provide you and your family with information about the benefits available to Cement Masons and how to use those benefits," it is only fitting that the Fund Office furnish Spanish versions of the benefit plans.

We currently have some printed documents in Spanish and are working toward adding more printed material, including the Summary Plan Description for the Health and Welfare Plan and Pension Plan. Other benefit information, such as, plan notices and the *Cement Mixer* are now available in Spanish. As the process of translating takes extra time, Spanish versions may not be distributed at the same time as those in English.


The Fund Office also has Spanish speaking employees who are able to assist Participants with questions or issues involving their benefits.

If you want to receive benefit information in Spanish (as well as in English), please follow the directions noted on the request form included with this newsletter. It's simple, all you need to do is complete the form and drop it in a mail box.

Que mejor manera para nuestros Participantes que hablan español, que leer los Beneficios de Planes en su propio idioma. De acuerdo con el propósito de este boletín de prensa "que proveerlos a usted y a su familia con la información acerca de los Beneficios diversos disponibles para los Participantes elegibles y como usar eficazmente estos Beneficios," conviene solo que la Oficina del Fondo proveen versiones en español de los Planes de beneficios.

Tenemos unos documentos de beneficio disponible en español y un día cerca mas información de beneficio como los folletos de Descripción Sumarios de los Planes de Salud y Bienestar y Pensión. Otra información de beneficios, como los avisos del Plan y del boletín *Cement Mixer* es disponible en español. Como el proceso de traducción toma tiempo adicional, no puede ser distribuido al mismo tiempo que sus contrapartes en ingles.

La Oficina del Fondo tiene los empleados que hablan español que pueden ayudar a los Participantes con las preguntas o problemas de los Planes de beneficios.

Si a usted le gustaría recibir información de los beneficios en español (en adición al ingles), por favor siga las instrucciones que notaron en la forma incluida en este boletín. Es fácil, nada mas necesita llenar la forma completamente y enviarla por correo. 

**Filling out forms...****Keep Your Address Up-To-Date  
Let Us Know When You Move**


In mid March, the Fund Office will mail a *Statement of Account* to active Cement Masons covering the work period from August 1, 2003 through January 31, 2004. If you do not receive yours by the end of March, it could mean we do not have your current address on file.

One of the forms you are asked to complete when you become a Cement Mason is an *Enrollment Form*. When you complete the *Enrollment Form*, you enroll you and your family in the benefit plans and inform the Fund Office of your current address. Upon receipt, we enter your address into the Fund's address file system. Without a current or correct address on file, any EOB's (payment notices), Plan notices, or checks will not be received by you. The Fund Office cannot make changes to your address file by a telephone call. If you move, complete a new *Enrollment Form* and mail it to the Fund Office. It is also important to notify your local union of your address change. The *Enrollment Form* is available at your Local Union or by calling the Fund Office.

If you move after receiving your *Statement of Account*, but before receipt of your Vacation/Holiday check, you should be aware that you must submit your new address, in writing, before the cut-off date (usually one month before checks are mailed). Vacation/

Holiday checks are mailed on November 30. If you do not meet the cut-off date *and* checks have not yet been mailed, you can call the Fund Office to ask that your check not be mailed (to your old address). Once your new address is on file, the Fund Office will mail your check. Otherwise, it will automatically be mailed to your old address.

You certainly want to be sure you receive your *Statement of Account*. This is your record of hours worked and reported by your employer(s). The statement tells you if and for how many months you are eligible for health and welfare benefits, lists pension hours, and vacation/holiday dollars. Past articles in this newsletter have stressed the importance of reviewing the statement and comparing it to your check stubs. If you find any discrepancies, you should report them immediately to the Fund Office or your Local Union. Unless we are notified of any errors or discrepancies, we assume that the information on the statement is correct. It is your work record and it is to your advantage to check it carefully and retain it for your records.

For information on reporting discrepancies on your statement, see the article under Questions & Answers on this page. 

**Questions & Answers**

**Q.** I always save my check stubs. When should I send them to the Fund Office?

**A.** First, you are right to save your check stubs. We urge all Cement Masons to retain them and keep them in a safe place.

**WHEN TO SEND CHECK STUBS**

Twice each year, the Fund Office mails you a *Statement of Account*. This statement lists your work hours by employer and the month worked. Check this statement carefully. If your worked hours do not appear on the statement, then send your check stubs to the Fund Office, but only for the period of hours not shown. Be sure your name and social security number appear on each check stub.

**WHEN NOT TO SEND CHECK STUBS**

If your *Statement of Account* shows "SUSP" under the Vacation Dollars column, it means the employer reported the hours, but failed to pay the contributions. In this case, it is not necessary to send your check stubs, because the hours were reported. The Trust Fund is in the process of collecting those contributions.

# CALENDAR

On or About This Date	We Will Mail	You Should
January 31, 2004 <i>(Mailed)</i>	Form 1099 (Pension Plan)	Retain for income tax purposes.
March 10, 2004	Annual Statement by Pensioner or Beneficiary	Complete, sign, and return statement to Fund Office as soon as possible. A DELAY IN RETURNING THE STATEMENT COULD AFFECT YOUR MONTHLY BENEFITS.
March 23, 2004	Statement of Account for Work Period of August 1, 2003 - January 31, 2004	Verify hours and report any discrepancies to your Local Union. Retain statement for your records.
March 23, 2004	Summary Annual Report	For information only. ERISA requires the Plan Administrator furnish this report to each Plan Participant annually.



## Contacting The Fund Office



Cement Masons Trust Funds  
220 Campus Lane  
Fairfield, CA 94534-1499

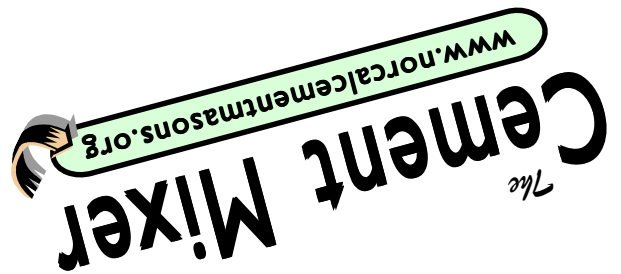


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Internet Web site:  
[www.norcalcementmasons.org](http://www.norcalcementmasons.org)

The *Cement Mixer* is published by the Northern California Cement Masons Funds Administration, Inc. and is intended to provide general information about the plans. It is not intended as a substitute for official Plan documents. Your rights as a Plan Participant or Beneficiary can only be determined by consulting the actual text of the Plan Booklet.



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