

The City of Spokane

## Weekly News Update for Jan. 3

*Stay up-to-date on City of Spokane and employee news with our weekly Employee Update.*

### **Paid Family Medical Leave Premium Rate Change**

#### **Starting Sunday, Jan. 1:**

- The total premium rate increased from 0.6% to 0.8% of the employees' gross wages, not including tips, up to the 2023 Social Security cap.
- Employers will pay approximately 27% of the total premium and employees will pay approximately 73%, unless otherwise stated in Union/Association agreements.
- The Social Security cap on gross wages is increasing from \$147,000 in 2022 to \$160,200 in 2023.
- The current rate of 0.6% of gross wages, up to the \$147,000 2022 cap, expired on Monday, Dec. 31.

#### **Why is the premium rate changing?**

Premiums, collected from employees and employers through quarterly reporting, fund the Paid Family Medical Leave Program. By law, the Paid Leave premium rate is recalculated annually on September 30th. The premium rate is then adjusted based on the contributions received from premiums and benefits paid to individuals during the previous year.

For more information on Paid Family Medical Leave [click here](#).

### **Did you change health plans at Open Enrollment?**

If you changed your health plan please read! Due to staff shortages, Premera Blue Cross and Kaiser Permanente will likely send your new membership card(s) after Jan. 1.

However, they will likely have your name and the name of your dependents, if applicable, in their enrollment system by Sunday, Jan. 1. If you require care effective Sunday, Jan. 1, and beyond, please reach out to their Customer Service Department to obtain your unique Member Number including other identifying information found on the card:

**Premera Blue Cross Customer Service:** 1-800-722-1471\*  
**Kaiser Permanente:** 1-888-901-4636\*

\*Be aware, hold times are currently excessive; up to 60 minutes. We apologize, on behalf of Premera and Kaiser, for the delays. The health insurance carriers are experiencing staff shortages the same as every industry during these unprecedented times.

## **City Switching to STA Connect Cards**

You may have heard that the Spokane Transit Authority (STA) is in the process of moving over to the Connect card. This means that the **City will transitioned to the new Connect cards on Sunday, Jan. 1 and on Wednesday, Feb. 1 City IDs will no longer work on the bus.**

### **Things to know before you request Connect**

- Employee's 18 and younger can get a Connect card free through the STA. The City of Spokane will not register these cards until the employee is 19 and required to pay fares.
- You have the option to download the [STA Connect app](#) to your smart phone and use your phone as the Connect card or you can request a physical Connect pass. The City of Spokane will only register one of these per employee since they are considered two different passes and have two separate fare caps.
- Volunteers can get a Connect card as well. Because we are unable to track these as easily, HR will maintain a spreadsheet of volunteers and their Connect cards will automatically expire at the end of the year unless the department extends it.
- Connect cards will be unregistered with the City of Spokane at time of separation, but can still be used by the separated employee by creating their own account with STA.

If you are a current bus rider, or are planning to ride the bus soon, please email the following information to: [Human Resources Connect Card Bus Pass](#).

- Your Legal Name
- Employee Number (located on your paystub or in PeopleSoft)
- If you have already downloaded the STA Connect app, or have a Connect card, provide the 20-digit member number so we can register you on the City of Spokane portal through STA.
- If you do not have a card yet and do not plan to use the STA Connect app, please email us that you would like a card sent to you.

Employees who do not ride the bus will not need to request the connect card and can obtain one later if they plan to start riding STA.

Human Resources does not have these cards on hand at this time, so collection of this information will be used to interoffice out cards as soon as we can. Do not stop by HR for a pass or you will be sad 😊.

## **More Information to Assist You**

*Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:*

[New Year's Resolutions for Mental Health](#)

President Abraham Lincoln said, "Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other." When thinking about a New Year's resolution, it is helpful to choose an objective that can be successfully reached. These goals may be short- or long-term, simple or complex, individual or shared. [Click here](#) for some of the most common New Year's resolutions.

### [Rising Through the Ranks](#)

Climbing the career ladder requires a sense of balance. How far do you want to climb? How fast do you want to go? Can you reach the next rung and still hang on to your integrity? And can you trust the person holding the ladder?

Hal Lancaster, a veteran observer of the career arena, provides answers to questions about rising through the ranks.

### **Employee Information Portal** ([covid19.spokanecity.org/](https://covid19.spokanecity.org/))

Remember, this Employee Information Portal is a great resource for employees to stay current on what's happening with the COVID-19 response. The [Employee Information Portal](#) can be accessed from work or home, using a computer or mobile device. All of the emailed information we have sent to employees is archived here.