

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission reminds its constituents to practice safe and ethical hunting as wild turkey season opens April 8 and continues through May 6, preceded by a youth-only week from April 1 through April 7. The daily limit is one turkey and the possession and season limit is two turkeys per hunter, only one of which may be taken during youth season.

During the youth season, hunting is only allowed for those younger than 16 years of age. Each youth hunter must be accompanied by a licensed adult at least 21 years old. An adult may accompany more than one youth during a particular hunt, but the adult cannot harvest a turkey. Each youth must report a harvest to the Wildlife Commission through a Big Game Harvest Report Card. License-exempt youths should report their harvest using a Big Game Harvest Report Card for License-Exempt Hunters.

The Commission encourages turkey hunters to follow basic safety guidelines, such as keeping their firearm muzzle pointed in a safe direction and positively identifying their target before pulling the trigger.

**Top 5 Turkey Hunter's Safety Tips**

- 1) Never stalk a turkey, which only increases your chances of being mistaken for game.
- 2) Leave the area (wearing blaze orange) if you think another hunter is already there.
- 3) Alert another hunter to your presence by saying "Stop" in a loud voice.
- 4) Never wear red, white, blue or black in the field - the colors of a tom's head and body.
- 5) Make sure your decoy or harvested turkey isn't visible when walking through the woods, wrapping them in blaze orange to avoid misidentification.

**Top 5 Turkey Hunter's Regulatory Considerations**

- 1) Report harvests using the Big Game Report Card.
- 2) Use of pistols, rifles or black powder rifles is prohibited.
- 3) Dogs are not allowed for hunting wild turkey.
- 4) Hunting is not allowed where bait has been placed until 10 days after all bait has been consumed or removed.
- 5) Electronic or recorded calls are not allowed for hunting wild turkey.

Anyone who witnesses suspicious activity such as poaching or baiting may be eligible to receive a reward (up to \$1,000) by reporting information that leads to a conviction to the Turn-In-Poachers program. For more information on eligible violations and how to submit a tip, visit [www.ncwildlife.org/wildtip](http://www.ncwildlife.org/wildtip).

Regulations and restrictions on turkey hunting, including information on youth season, are available in the 2016-17 Inland Fishing, Hunting and Trapping Regulations Digest, beginning on page 57, and available online at [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

**NC Treasurer Folwell Announces New Unfunded Liabilities Projections for State Health Plan**

State Treasurer Dale R. Folwell, CPA, announced that a preliminary actuarial review of the state's unfunded liability related to Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) for the Retiree Health Benefit currently stands at \$43 billion as of June 30, 2016 under the new accounting standards to become effective later this year. That figure represents an increase of more than \$10 billion from the previous calculated unfunded liability of \$32.5 billion based on the prior accounting standard as of the same date.

These figures were taken from a preliminary draft of a report, due April 25, 2017, to determine the potential impact of new accounting requirements imposed by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). These requirements address benefits other than pensions, such as health care, that governments provide to their retired employees. In North Carolina, OPEB liabilities are almost entirely retiree benefits under the State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees, which is managed by the Department of State Treasurer.

The State Health Plan covers 700,000 employees, retirees, and dependents. North Carolina, like most states, uses a pay-as-you-go model to cover the Retiree Health Benefit, which is mostly subsidized by taxpayers. Little money has been set aside over the last 30 years for retiree medical benefits provided by the State Health Plan.

"Whether it is the new GASB standards or the considerations of credit rating agencies, we can no longer ignore the impact these liabilities will have on the financial future of the state," said Treasurer Folwell. "Even as the General Assembly has fully funded the pension, we have witnessed the unfunded health care and pension liabilities of our state continue to grow. Deliberate, gradual action is required to preserve and strengthen these plans. North Carolina is certainly not alone on this issue, but we have the unique opportunity to lead the nation and make a generational difference for North Carolinians."

In February, the Debt Affordability Advisory Committee, chaired by Treasurer Folwell, released its 2017 Debt Affordability Study advising the Governor and the General Assembly on the estimated debt capacity of the General and Transportation Funds for the upcoming 10 fiscal years.

For the first time, the primary recommendation of this year's Debt Affordability Study suggests significant additional money be put toward North Carolina's unfunded pension and Retiree Employee Health benefit obligations.

The State Health Plan, a division of the Department of State Treasurer, provides health care coverage to more than 700,000 teachers, state employees, retirees, current and former lawmakers, state university and community college personnel, and their dependents.

**NC Division of Employment Security Initiates New Security Features on Website**

**Greater protection of personal sign-in information for customers and businesses**

The Division of Employment Security (DES) began changing how customers sign in to its website beginning on March 28. This new sign-in procedure allows claimants and employers to create their own usernames and passwords rather than using Social Security Numbers (SSNs) or Employer Account Numbers (EANs).

"This sign-in change will enhance overall information security on the Employment Security website," said North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland. "We are constantly looking for and implementing ways to improve how our customers access our services."

Usernames and passwords will be more secure. As needed, customers will have the ability to reset and change their passwords without contacting DES. For all customers, all services on the DES portal, [des.nc.gov](http://des.nc.gov), will be accessed using the same username and password. Employers will be able to designate additional administrators and control their access to claims and tax functions by having separate usernames for employees and remitters (third party administrator, power of attorney, and others).

"Protecting customer information is always a priority," said Employment Security Assistant Secretary Ted Brinn. "This change will also be beneficial to claimants and employers using our system. Users will no longer be required to sign in multiple times."

For more information, customers can go to [des.nc.gov](http://des.nc.gov) and view the frequently asked questions (FAQs).

**Wadesboro Lions Club Welcomes New Members**

The Wadesboro Lions Club meets at the Papa Joe's Restaurant the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. For more information about these meetings or becoming a member, please call Lion Jim Chandler at 910-571-1448.

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