



NEWS

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NTSB: Nation's rails remain vulnerable

Graniteville report highlights safety and security weaknesses; Rail Conference's 'High Alert' report warns of other potential hazards

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) on November 29 recommended that rail companies make important operational changes, including reducing speeds in populated areas, to avoid another catastrophic accident like the crash in Graniteville, S.C., in January that killed nine people. The deadly accident occurred when a Norfolk Southern train crashed into a parked freight train that was carrying tank cars of chlorine gas. One of the tank cars exploded, causing a cloud of toxic gas to blanket the area. Eight residents of Graniteville and the locomotive engineer operating the train died after inhaling the gas.

"Rail companies must act now to implement changes recommended by the NTSB to protect the public," said John Murphy, Director of the Teamsters Rail Conference. "Our country cannot afford to wait for the Federal Railroad Administration to force these corporations to do what is right."

The report by the NTSB highlights the very real danger of trains moving across tracks that have misaligned switches in "dark territory" or un-signaled territory. The NTSB says that rail companies should

be required to install a device to visually or electronically alert workers to the position of the switch, day and night. Rail companies also should be required to position tank cars toward the rear of trains and to reduce speeds through populated areas to reduce the risk of deadly crashes, the NTSB said.

"This accident was devastating to the community and the country," Murphy said. "We owe it to the citizens of Graniteville and the nine people who lost their lives to do everything we can to prevent another tragedy."

The report also said railroads should provide an emergency escape breathing apparatus — and the appropriate training — to all crewmembers on freight trains carrying hazardous materials.

"We said from the beginning that if our son had been given an appropriate escape breathing apparatus, he might have survived this horrible accident," said Rebecca Schmidt, the mother of Christopher G. Seeling, the locomotive engineer who died in the crash. Seeling, just 28 years old, was Secretary-Treasurer of Division 85 (Columbia, S.C.) of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), which is a division of the Teamsters Rail Conference.

Thousands of track switches are left unattended and unmonitored every day on rail tracks across the country. Locomotive engineers overwhelmingly warned that rail yards and equipment are not secure. In a recent Teamsters report, "High Alert: Workers Warn of Security Gaps on Nation's Railroads," 94 percent of locomotive engineers said rail yard access was not secure and 90 percent reported that rail equipment — including switches — were not secure. Most indicated that hazardous materials were part of the cargo being shipped along their daily routes. A copy of the full report is on the BLET website.

"We will continue to closely monitor the status of changes to the rails in America — the rail corporations have got to make commitments to protect their employees and the public much more seriously than they ever have," Murphy said. •



FRA issues amended Emergency Order No. 24

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued revisions to Emergency Order No. 24 on November 18.

Generally, the revisions incorporate the information provided in Questions and Answers published by FRA on November 4th. However, FRA also addressed the three specific items contained in the Petition for Amendment that the BLET filed on November 7th, and tightened the original requirement with respect to switch point indicators. A copy of the revised emergency order is available on the BLET website at the link provided at the end of this article.

As for BLET's request for clarification concerning the significance of a locomotive engineer's initials appearing on the Switch Point Awareness Form (SPAF), FRA stated:

"BLET asked that FRA clarify that entry of the engineer's initials is an affirmation that the communication (representation) has been received and not that the engineer can personally vouch for the actions taken on the ground. FRA affirms that the engineer's responsibility is to acknowledge the information provided by the conductor or

brakeman, not to act as a guarantor with respect to the actual position in which the switch was left."

With respect to our request that handing-off of switches between crews be prohibited, FRA stated:

"BLET asked that language in item (2) of the order be amended to delete 'except when the switch is left in the charge of a crewmember of another train or the train dispatcher directs otherwise,' following the requirement that switches be left in normal position when not in use. BLET suggested that this would heighten the sense of individual responsibility that the order seeks to promote. FRA appreciates the suggestion and recognizes that it is thematically consistent with the general thrust of the order. However, FRA is unable to act upon it for three reasons. First, this change does not appear to be necessary to abate the emergency. Recent accidents caused by misaligned switches have generally involved error on the part of the crew initially reversing the switch, rather than miscommunication or lapses associated with handing off responsibility for the

switch. Second, such a change could expose employees to hazards unnecessarily, as when it might be necessary to cross live tracks, walk on uneven ballast, or traverse areas covered with snow or ice. Third, imposing this requirement would cause significant delay and inefficiency in railroad operations."

The BLET's Petition for Amendment also objected to FRA's retreat — in Q&A #22 — from the original requirement that all intra-crew confirmations concerning restoring a switch be made via radio, by accepting alternative means of communication. While FRA has decided to allow alternative means of communication, it limited the circumstances in which such alternatives were appropriate as a result of the BLET's petition:

"A concern shared by many commenters was that the EO was written in such a way as to indicate that unless radio communication was inoperable, no alternative method of communication among crewmembers would be acceptable to indicate a switch position. Some railroads re-

quested an amendment because they preferred to use a method of communication other than radio as their primary method, such as hand or whistle signals. FRA has issued a clarifying amendment to indicate that it will accept alternate methods of intra-crew communication when they afford an equivalent level of communication integrity relevant to the prevailing operating conditions. FRA agrees with a comment from BLET that there will be situations where hand signals do not provide unambiguous information, as where a ground employee is expected to restore a switch behind a movement that will not be using the switch to exit the area. In those cases, radio communications or face-to-face communication will be required."

Lastly, FRA has narrowed automatic relief from compliance with the requirements of EO 24 by requiring that the use of switch point indicators must be approved by FRA:

"In this Notice, FRA has required specific acceptance of "switch point

See FRA Emergency Order, Page 5

BLET NEWS

BLET's Kinsman begins 2006 campaign

Getting an early start and building momentum for the 2006 elections, Brother James Kinsman — Chairman of the BLET's Wisconsin State Legislative Board — has announced that he is running for political office in his home state.

Brother Kinsman, 34, hopes to take government control out of the hands of career politicians and return it to the people by running for a State Assembly office in Wisconsin's 94th Assembly District.

"Every day when I turn on the TV, radio, or read the paper, I see all the partisan rantings and the partisan politics," he said. "But it's the people who are stuck in the middle — those who are busting their humps to scrape together a living. Instead of focusing on real issues — like prescription drug costs, jobs, and healthcare — career politicians are preoccupied with partisan politics. I want to bring representation back to the people."

Brother Kinsman has likened career politicians to "ticks on a dog's butt," as he told his hometown newspaper, the La Crosse Tribune, in an interview in June.

"My motto is 'of the people, by the people, and for the people,' not 'of the party, by the party and for the party,'" he said.

His opponent in the upcoming election is 10-year incumbent Mike Heusch. That's one reason why Kinsman decided to begin his campaign early, even though the elections won't be held until November of 2006.

"When you're taking on a 10 year incumbent who is the Assembly Party Leader, you need an early start to gain momentum and raise as much money as possible," Kinsman said. "I plan to hit the ground running in 2006."

BLET National President Don Hahs praised Brother Kinsman for his forward thinking.

"I commend Brother Kinsman for not only running for political office, but for planning ahead and doing things right," President Hahs said. "It is important for union members to run for political office so that working people have a voice in the State Houses and on Capitol Hill. I encourage other BLET members who may be inspired by Brother Kinsman's campaign to following his lead."

Brother Kinsman served in the U.S. Army and then held various odd jobs before finding work with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe in 1998. He started out in the maintenance of way department before transferring to train, yard and engine (TY&E) service later that same year. In March of 2002, he joined the Brotherhood and then earned promotion to locomotive engineer in July of 2002.

Immediately prior to working for BNSF, Kinsman worked as a welder at a non-union factory in Wyoming. There, he learned the importance of belonging to a union and the risks involved with union organizing.

"The day before Thanksgiving, I was told not to

come back to work," he said. "A select group of co-workers and I were fired for attending a union meeting put on by the United Steelworkers of America. Management was afraid we'd bring the union to our workplace."

Brother Kinsman said he has always been a labor rights advocate, and his experience as a non-union welder has served as motivation and inspiration over the years.

The experience motivated him to become a first-term BLET State Legislative Board Chairman. He is currently the youngest Chairman serving the Brotherhood in that capacity.

He was also inspired to make change for the citizens of Wisconsin. "I want to make an impact here in Wisconsin," he said. "I don't tread lightly and I want to make positive change."

Kinsman finally decided to run for public office after a lot of discussion with labor leaders throughout the state, but more importantly, only after a long discussion with his family.

Brother Kinsman grew up as a foster child, and what was missing from his childhood has helped him truly appreciate what he has today.

"We all have one goal — we want what's best for our families," he said. "We all want to put our families first — that's what's important."

He and his wife of 11 years, Tara, have two children: Alexandria, 10, and Nathan, 9. •

Part III: The 'pretzel logic' of remote control

Carriers, AAR, UTU employ twisted logic to justify implementation, continued use of RCL

(This is the third in a three-part series of articles in which the BLET takes a look at recent actions of the Federal Railroad Administration, the United Transportation Union, and the Association of American Railroads to further expand the use of Remote Control Locomotives in the railroad industry. Part I was published in the October issue of the Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen News while Part II was published in the November issue.)

(A complete copy of this series is available on the BLET website at the following link: <http://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/pretzel.pdf>)

(In Part III, we conclude by posing numerous questions that remain unanswered by the FRA, UTU and AAR.)

Unanswered Questions

This recent turn of events raises a series of questions that the RCL troika must address.

To FRA: In discussing the "unique operating characteristics presented by RCLs," why does your letter fail to include the hazards arising from the autonomous and authoritarian actions of the RCL's Onboard Control Computer, as explained in the Gamst/Gavalla Report?

Why have you continued to refuse to initiate a rulemaking for processor-based RCL operations, based on the rationale used to determine that rulemaking was appropriate and nec-

Part 3 of a three-part series

essary for processor-based Positive Train Control operations?

Since you were "surprised to learn that railroads had some RCL operations on main tracks" because guidelines instead of regulations were issued, and accepted data provided by the railroads that you had previously identified as flawed, why do you now believe that the industry will be any more forthcoming in addressing your concerns, particularly when railroads seek "credit" for RCOs operating on main track in satisfying the 120-hour operating recommendation?

Doesn't the fact that you deemed "most" main track RCO operations as adequate avoid consideration and potential mitigation of rare-event, high-risk accidents that could have catastrophic results?

One reason you conclude that conventional operations on main tracks are safer than RCL operations is that "engineers have the ability to immediately respond to these situations with considerably more controls than those afforded to RCOs." Why did this aspect of your discussion exclude factors such as longer on-the-job experience, more experience in train handling under varying operational conditions and,

above all, the kinesthetic feedback (that "seat-of-the-pants feeling") a conventional engineer receives from his/her locomotive and train consist.

To AAR: If the "rail industry is committed to the safe implementation of this important technology," why does it wait to be pushed by the FRA for implementation of RCL safety not extant on the railroads? Why haven't the Class I railroads provided FRA with data delineating labor hours and employee headcounts for switching operations, as requested in Recommendation C.4 of FRA's RCL guidelines?

To UTU: You echo FRA's findings and proposals concerning RCO on main track, why have you not accepted the findings of the Gamst/Gavalla Report, covering mainly yard and industrial switching operations within yard limits — showing that the majority of hazards occur in such locations — in which so many UTU members participated?

Privately, some have attempted to dismiss the Gamst/Gavalla Report as a bought-and-paid-for "opinion piece."

This conveniently overlooks the fact that Dr. Gamst has contracted to perform research for FRA, AAR, and UTU in the past. Moreover, the implication that Mr. Gavalla, a former senior FRA safety official, is turning tricks is despicable. Instead of utilizing "focus groups" — as FRA has done in the past when conducting research — the Report was the product of a vastly broader, more comprehensive and longer term ethnographic study than

ever has been undertaken by its critics, and was conducted by independent professionals with impeccable credentials.

Publicly, of course, FRA, AAR, and UTU have chosen to ignore the Report. They have no choice but to do so, because they cannot refute the supporting narratives, conceptualizations, and methodologies employed by the authors. FRA, AAR, and UTU while choosing to ignore the Report are missing opportunities to improve safety. Predictable accidents that occur which are the result of RCL hazards identified in the Report, such as the amputation earlier this week, will cause many to ask if ignoring the Report's findings and recommendations is better than addressing them openly.

BLET National President Don M. Hahs had this to say about this latest turn of events: "I will not comment, for the present, on the legal and collective bargaining implications of FRA's letter, and the reaction of AAR and UTU. However, everyone should be mindful that scores of municipalities have joined us to voice their concern about remote control, the State of California has requested a RCL rulemaking, and the State of Washington has not closed the door with respect to its own rulemaking. We will not be deterred from keeping this issue on the front burner, because the safety of all railroad workers and the communities through which our nation's railroads operate demand no less." •

Burlington Northern Santa Fe



BNSF reported third quarter revenues of \$3.22 billion, which is an all-time record high for the railway. Revenue

rose to record levels in spite of fuel surcharges of \$296 million, nearly triple the \$95 million paid in the third-quarter of 2004.

BNSF experienced revenue increases in all four of the Company's business groups during the third quarter. Consumer Products revenues increased \$234 million to \$1,331 million, largely from strong volume increases across most of the business sectors. Industrial Products revenues increased \$109 million to \$743 million. Agricultural Products revenues were up \$104 million to \$522 million, due largely to strong exports through the Gulf and Pacific Northwest ports. Coal revenues rose by \$33 million to \$622 million.

Operating expenses for the third-quarter of 2005 were \$2.54 billion. This compares with third-quarter 2004 operating expenses of \$2.69 billion.

The railway's quarterly operating ratio was 75.8 percent, which was an improvement over the 2005 second quarter. •

Canadian National Railway



Revenues at Canadian National for third quarter 2005 increased to \$1,810 million, with CN's grain and fertilizers, coal, and intermodal segments registering double-digit revenue growth. Forest products, metals and

minerals, and automotive revenues also improved.

CN boasted a record net income of \$411 million this quarter and operating income of \$665 million. CN also has a record nine-month free cash flow of \$1,058 million (all figures in Canadian dollars).

CN's revenue performance was driven largely by increased freight rates. An important contributor to these rate increases was a higher fuel surcharge owing to increased crude oil prices. Partly offsetting revenue gains during the quarter was the unfavourable \$80 million translation impact of the stronger Canadian dollar on U.S.-dollar denominated revenues. The appreciation of the Canadian dollar reduced CN's third-quarter 2005 net income by approximately \$15 million.

The railway's operating ratio for the quarter was 63.3 percent, an improvement of 2.1 percent. •

Canadian Pacific Railway



**CANADIAN
PACIFIC
RAILWAY**

Canadian Pacific Railway reported net income increased 15 percent to \$204 million in the third quarter of 2005, compared with \$177 million in the same period of 2004. Revenue increased to \$1,105 mil-

lion, a third-quarter record, from \$990 million in third-quarter 2004. There were double-digit growth rates in four of CPR's business lines, led by coal at 35 percent and intermodal at 13 percent (all figures in Canadian dollars).

Operating expenses before other specified items were \$855 million in third quarter 2005, compared with \$771 million in the same period of 2004. The increase was mainly due to higher fuel and compensation and benefits costs. Fuel prices reached record highs, however, CPR recovered almost all of the increase through revenue from its surcharge mechanism, as well as hedging and fuel efficiency measures.

For the first nine months of 2005, net income is up 44 percent to \$408 million compared with \$284 million in 2004. Operating ratio for the quarter improved to 77.4 percent and is at 78.3 percent for the first nine months of 2005. •

CSX Transportation



CSX Corporation reported third quarter net earnings of \$164 million, a 31 percent increase in earnings of \$123 from the same quarter in 2004. In the quarter, the company's core surface transportation businesses, which include rail and intermodal, achieved:

- Record third-quarter operating income of \$361 million, up 46 percent from the same period last year and representing the seventh quarter of year-over-year improvement; and

- Revenue of \$2.1 billion, an increase of 9 percent over the third quarter of 2004 with strength in all major markets.

Hurricane Katrina, which made landfall near Buras, La., on Aug. 29, damaged a CSX line running 85 miles east of New Orleans and five major bridges. Repairs will continue through early next year. CSX says the total cost of the storm will total \$250 million, but it has insurance that will cover the vast majority of the expenses. CSX's coal revenue increased 16 percent to \$491 million, while merchandise shipment revenue rose 8 percent to \$1.05 billion.

CSX's operating ratio was 83.0 percent, an improvement of 4.3 points from the same quarter last year. •

Kansas City Southern



For the third quarter of 2005, Kansas City Southern set an all-time quarterly record with consolidated revenues of \$384.6 million, which were a result of the 2005 acquisitions. KCS also boasted a consolidated net income of \$110.5 million.

KCS now includes U.S. rail operations (Kansas City Southern Railway Company and Texas Mexican Railway Company) and Mexican rail operations (TFM, S.A. de C.V.). The record consolidated revenues represent an increase of \$221.4 million over 2004, substantially as a result of the acquisition of the Texas Mexican Railway Company and TFM.

Consolidated operating expenses for the third quarter of 2005 were \$386.5 million versus \$144.0 million in the third quarter of 2004, primarily due to the previously referenced acquisitions, and increased claims reserves. In July, hurricane Emily reduced operating income from Mexican operations by \$1.8 million. In September, hurricanes Katrina and Rita negatively impacted U.S. operations by approximately \$7.8 million and Mexican operations by \$2.4 million. •

Norfolk Southern



For the third quarter of 2005, Norfolk Southern Cor-

poration reported net income of \$301 million, compared with \$288 million for the same period of 2004. Third-quarter 2004 results included a gain from the Conrail corporate reorganization that increased reported results by \$53 million. Third-quarter 2005 net income was 28 percent higher than the \$235 million in the same period of 2004 excluding the gain.

Railway operating revenues for the quarter increased 16 percent to a record \$2.16 billion. Income from railway operations improved 13 percent to \$528 million. Intermodal revenue climbed 17 percent to an all-time high. Coal revenue was up 22 percent on record volumes and merchandise revenue increased 13 percent. For the first nine months, railway operating revenues set a record, rising 17 percent to \$6.27 billion compared with \$5.36 billion during the first nine months of 2004.

The railroad's operating ratio was 75.5 percent. •

Union Pacific Corp.



Union Pacific Corporation reported 2005 third quarter net income of \$369 million, which includes the \$118 million after-tax non-cash income tax expense reduction that the company announced on October 7, 2005. Excluding the tax item, net income would have been \$251 million. This compares to net income of \$202 million in the third quarter of 2004.

For the quarter, Union Pacific reported operating income of \$481 million, up 15 percent compared to \$418 million for the same period in 2004.

The railroad's operating revenue grew 13 percent to \$3.5 billion versus 2004. Its operating margin improved to 13.9 percent in the third quarter of 2005 compared to 13.6 percent in 2004. UP's total commodity revenue reached best-ever quarterly levels, reflecting a 1 percent growth in carloads to a record 2.4 million loads, along with yield improvements and fuel cost recovery under the company's surcharge programs

The Railroad's average quarterly fuel price including transportation and taxes was \$1.88 per gallon versus \$1.25 per gallon a year ago

Two of the Railroad's three key operating metrics, as reported to the Association of American Railroads, improved in the third quarter of 2005 versus the third quarter of 2004. Higher train speeds, lower terminal dwell times and smaller rail car inventories would all be indicators of better system fluidity. In the face of record demand, average terminal dwell time decreased 7 percent from 30.1 hours to 28.1 hours and rail car inventory decreased 1 percent to 318,626 cars

Average third quarter train speed fell slightly from 21.8 mph in 2004 to 21.6 mph in the third quarter of 2005. Average train speeds have increased more than 1 mph during the first three quarters of 2005 from an average of 20.5 mph in the fourth quarter of 2004.

Overall, commodity revenue was up 12 percent versus the third quarter of 2004. The breakdown is as follows: Agricultural up 27 percent; Industrial products up 16 percent; Intermodal up 13 percent; Chemicals up 9 percent; Automotive up 4 percent; and Energy up 4 percent.

Operating ratio for the quarter was 86.1 percent. Year to date operating ratio is 87.3 percent. •

BLET NEWS

Remote control locomotive collides with UP freight train

Quick-thinking locomotive engineer on conventional freight helped make accident less severe

A remotely controlled locomotive (RCL) pulling dozens of freight cars collided with a Union Pacific freight train at UP's Fife Yard near Tacoma, Wash., on November 13 at approximately 9:45 a.m. Pacific time.

The remote control train side-swiped an inbound container train heading for the Port of Tacoma after having arrived from Chicago. The collision knocked two articulated cars loaded with shipping containers from the rail, and punctured the fuel tanks on each of the remote control locomotives. The accident prompted an emergency response by the Tacoma Fire Department, hazardous material experts from Union Pacific, and from outside contractors.

A preliminary investigation conducted by officials with Division 892 (Seattle) of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) revealed that the container train crew had received authorization to shove their train towards the interchange yard owned by Tacoma Rail, near the Port of Tacoma.

"The train was in the process of crossing over to the Tacoma Rail interchange track when the RCL job collided with it," said Thomas Frederick, Local Chairman of Division 892.

"They had shoved approximately 6,000 feet through the crossover already, so there can be no doubt that they had the right-of-way and prior au-

thorization to make their movement." Frederick noted that the collision occurred on non-signalized yard trackage, with movements authorized by a local supervisor.

"This could have been much worse," Frederick continued. "As it is, preliminary estimates have 300 gallons of diesel fuel in the ground. We are less than one-fourth of a mile from the Puyallup River and about one mile from Puget Sound. If the RCL had collided with a tank car of chlorine or propane, this would have been a disaster of epic proportions."

Frederick credits the alertness of Engineer John Hesse, a member of BLET Division 892, for preventing a much bigger derailment.

"John saw the RCL coming at him on the adjacent track and stopped his train prior to the collision," Frederick said. "He also contacted the manager at Fife Yard and told them to contact the RCL crew to immediately stop their movement."

The accident could have been much worse, but it also could have been avoided.

"It is probable this incident would have been avoided with either an engineer in the cab, or one of the RCL operators riding the locomotive to protect the direction of the movement," said Dr. Mark Ricci, Chairman of the BLET Washington State Legislative Board. "We went before the Washington Utili-



The actions of a BLET member made this remote control accident much less severe, BLET investigators say.

ties and Transportation Commission seeking rules that would have required the railroads in Washington State to provide point protection. Our efforts have gone for naught, so far. I hope it doesn't take a major disaster to finally get the attention of the regulatory authorities. We got lucky this time, but our luck will soon run out."

Frederick indicated that the BLET

investigation would also focus on whether a fail-safe system designed to stop an RCL before it encroached upon an improperly aligned switch was installed at the derailment site, and if so, whether it was functioning as intended. Frederick also indicated that investigators from the Federal Railroad Administration had been notified of the incident and asked to respond. •

Important information about a Medco prescription benefit option

(Medco issued the following press release on November 15.)

After months of working together, Medco and the railroad unions that sponsor the coverage available to you under Group Policy GA-23111 are pleased to announce a new Medicare Part D prescription drug plan that has been created specifically for GA-23111 participants. YOURx PLAN™ is the culmination of a process that began soon after Congress passed legislation establishing the new Medicare Part D drug benefit, and is a Medicare-approved, customized prescription drug

plan (PDP) specifically designed for GA-23111 participants.

Your enhanced prescription drug plan offers:

- Access to over 51,000 retail network pharmacies;
- Convenient home delivery through Medco By Mail;
- No deductible and 20% coverage during the coverage gap;
- Co-payments as low as \$4 for generics and \$17 for preferred brand-name drugs for a 30-day supply at a retail pharmacy;
- Co-payments as low as \$4 for generics and \$34 for preferred brand-

name drugs for a 90-day supply through Medco By Mail;

- Access to thousands of quality brand-name and generic drugs;
- A monthly premium of \$87.

Medco is an industry leader in reducing prescription costs for millions of Americans and has been serving the prescription drug coverage needs of railroad retirees since June 1993. If you decide to join the Medco offering, the transition will be an easy one. And your enrollment process into the plan will not involve a lot of paperwork.

You will receive more details on

Medco's YOURx PLAN™ specifically designed for railroad retirees in early November. Once you receive the materials, carefully review them and complete and return the enrollment form to Medco as soon as possible to ensure there is no gap in coverage.

Medco looks forward to continuing to serve the prescription drug benefit needs of railroad retirees. If you have any questions about your customized plan, please call us toll-free at 1-800-590-6802 (TTY/TDD users should call 1-800-716-3231), or visit us at www.medco.com/medd/railroad on the Web. •

United Healthcare update: Early retirement plan increases lifetime maximum

(United Healthcare issued the following news release on November 17.)

The lifetime maximum benefit for each individual covered under The Railroad Employees National Early Retirement Major Medical Benefit Plan (UnitedHealthcare's Policy GA-46000) is adjusted each year based on the medical cost component of the Consumer Price Index. As of January 1, 2006, this maximum will increase from \$92,400 to \$96,400. The \$4000 in additional benefits payable applies to expenses incurred on or after January 1, 2006.

An important consideration for individuals thinking about retirement is health coverage after retirement. The information below summarizes the eligibility requirements under the National Early Retirement Major Medical Benefit Plan.

Eligibility Rules

For Age Annuitants:

- You apply for a 60/30 annuity for which you are eligible:
 - on or after the date you reach age 60, or
 - anytime during the three months before your 60th birthday, provided you continue working into the month before the month in which you turn age 60.

- On the day before you apply for your annuity, you must be covered (other than under COBRA) under The Railroad Employees National Health and Welfare Plan.

For Disability Annuitants:

- You have a current connection with the railroad industry.
- You have applied for a disability annuity to which you are entitled.
- You are covered under The Railroad Employees National Health and Welfare Plan (other than by COBRA) on the day before the latest of the following dates:
 - the date you reach age 60;
 - the date you became disabled;
 - the date your railroad service equals 30 years.

If you retire and are eligible for GA-46000, you

PASSENGER RAIL NEWS

Railroad workers take Amtrak message to commuters

In mid-November, commuters traveling through Penn Station in Newark were greeted by rail workers warning of a possible Amtrak shutdown in their future. Locomotive engineers and maintenance of way workers who are represented by the Teamsters Rail Conference passed out leaflets to thousands of commuters using Amtrak.

It was one of a string of informational pickets conducted by the Rail Conference, which educated commuters in other cities such as Boston.

"Many of the commuters were surprised to hear that Amtrak service might stop," said Kevin Hussey,



a member of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWED). "The Amtrak board won't negotiate with us so a service shutdown may be our only option."

"We want every rail commuter to call Congress and ask them to tell the Amtrak board of directors to bargain fairly with the rail unions," said Fred Simpson, president of the BMWED.

With thousands of commuters passing through the Newark station daily, rail workers passed out nearly all of their fliers and spoke to many commuters. "I bet the switchboard at the U.S. Capitol is going to be busy today," said Mark Kenny,

General Chairman of the BLET's Amtrak General Committee of Adjustment. "But we have to use every available opportunity to get some movement on this issue."

This year the Amtrak board of directors continued its stall tactics on union bargaining. In addition, the Amtrak board announced its intention to cut apart Amtrak, leaving the eastern corridor intact, but requiring local governments to foot the bills for local service.

The Teamsters Rail Conference represents more than 70,000 rail workers nationwide, including the memberships of the BMWED and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET). •

Amtrak Board of Directors criticized by Congress for firing David Gunn

The Amtrak Board fired President David Gunn on November 9. The decision was intensely criticized by many.

During a hearing of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Subcommittee on Railroads on November 15, Republicans and Democrats denounced the board for firing Gunn. Days after the board fired Gunn, Representative Steven LaTourette, the chairman of the subcommittee, said that the board might have acted illegally because it lacked a quorum.

LaTourette said the board had apparently not had a quorum in the last few years. He said that under the board's bylaws, a quorum would be five of seven directors. The board

has only four directors, and two of those will lose their seats when Congress recesses for the year in a few weeks.

The Department of Transportation's chief counsel, Jeffrey A. Rosen, who also serves on the Amtrak board as the representative of the transportation secretary, disputed Representative LaTourette on that point and others. But others at the hearing, some seeking to reinstate Gunn, seized on the procedural questions surrounding the board.

Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia's delegate to the House and a member of the transportation committee, described the board's uncertain legal status as "a lawsuit wait-

ing to happen."

Exactly why Gunn was fired after three and a half years on the job was not completely clear. Gunn said it was because he had opposed the board's preliminary moves to strip Amtrak of the tracks in the Northeast Corridor, from Washington through New York to Boston.

Board Chairman Laney denied that that was the board's intention. He said Gunn had lost enthusiasm for contracting out food service and train maintenance, adding that those steps would cut losses and were part of a strategic plan approved by the board in April. Gunn said he had worked hard to help write that plan and was deeply involved

in carrying out parts of it that the railroad could accomplish on its own.

During the hearing, Laney did admit to the subcommittee that he has had closed-door discussions with private parties interested in purchasing 500 miles of track and other assets along the Northeast Corridor from Washington to Boston.

Speaking to a meeting of the Association for a Better New York, Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta, who is also on Amtrak's board, said critics were wrong to think the board was trying to shut the system down. According to Mineta, the board of Amtrak is looking for a new president to turn the troubled railroad

around, not dismantle it.

"Let me suggest that the best indicator of the board's true intentions will be their selection of Amtrak's next chief executive," Mineta told the group of business, civic and political leaders. "Board President David Laney made clear that they are looking for a turnaround CEO and not a liquidator. And I agree."

Senator Charles Schumer, an Amtrak supporter, disputed the idea that the board wants to turn the railroad around.

"The administration is trying to save Amtrak like the wolf is trying to save Little Red Riding Hood," he said in a statement. "Don't be fooled, the Bush administration wants to kill Amtrak, not save it." •

BLET JOB BANK

Amtrak

Amtrak, the National Railroad Passenger Corp., is recruiting Locomotive Engineers to work in the following areas:

- Jacksonville, Fla.
- Lorton, Va. (Auto Train)
- Florence, S.C.
- Raleigh, N.C.
- Miami, Fla.
- Charlotte, N.C.

Duties include the safe operation of diesel-electric locomotives, complying with train orders, wayside signals, railroad operating rules, special instructions, and federal, state and local regulations to transport passengers and equipment safely and efficiently. Must also perform air brake tests as required and must frequently make timely and critical decisions under stressful conditions.

Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED. Candidates must also have a current Class 1 Engineer Certificate and must have operated an engine within one year. Candidates must pass the Hogan Personality Inventory. Candidates must be able to report to their crew base within a two-hour call period.

Resumes must be received by December 31, 2005. Please mail resumes as soon as possible to:

Amtrak Human Resources, Attn: ENG
900 2nd Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

Resumes may also be faxed to:
Attn: Engineer — (Location Desired)
Fax: (202) 906-3349

EOE, F/M, D/V — Amtrak is an equal employment opportunity employer.

FRA Emergency Order

Continued from Page 1

indicators" as alternative to the rule because the term does not apply to a closed set of technologies and in order to provide FRA an opportunity to evaluate whether the technology provides safety equivalent to that provided by compliance with this order by properly qualified employees;" and

"Relief from this EO is automatically granted when ... [h]and-operated main track switches in non-signalized territory are protected by switch point indicators accepted by the Associate

Administrator as providing safety equivalent to that provided by positioning and securing of switches in compliance with this order."

While FRA does not require that each employee affected by EO 24 be provided a copy of Notice No. 2, it does mandate that all instructions given to such employees be consistent with the changes contained therein. The BLET will continue to keep members apprised of any further developments concerning this matter.

A copy of the revised Emergency Order is available at:

<http://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/EO24Notice2Final.pdf> •

United Healthcare

Continued from Page 4

can also purchase supplemental coverage under GA-23111, Plan E. Generally, Plan E pays 70% of the expenses not paid under GA-46000 and has a lifetime maximum of \$500,000

Enrollment Is Necessary

When you retire, your railroad will not report you to UnitedHealthcare as a retiree eligible for GA-46000. You must enroll yourself and your family with UnitedHealthcare. You can do this in two ways:

- You can complete and return the "Retiree and Dependent Information"

form found in the center of the GA-46000 employee booklet. Your eligibility will be verified and a GA-46000 ID card will be sent to you. You can obtain a GA-46000 booklet from your employer or union representative.

- You can purchase GA-23111, Plan E supplemental coverage. Your eligibility for GA-46000 will be verified when your enrollment for that coverage is processed. ID cards for both GA-46000 and GA-23111 will be sent to you. A booklet explaining the Plan E benefits and an Enrollment form can be obtained by calling UnitedHealthcare.

If you have any questions about your eligibility for GA-46000 or the benefits provided under the Plan, call UnitedHealthcare at 1-800-842-9905. •

Events that can affect retirement benefits

Rights to benefits under the Railroad Retirement Act also carry responsibilities for reporting events that may affect the payment of these benefits to the employee or to members of the employee's family. If these events are not reported, benefit overpayments can occur that have to be repaid, sometimes with interest and penalties.

Events that can affect the payment of a railroad retirement annuity and result in overpayments if not promptly reported include:

- social security or certain other benefit awards, and changes in the amount of such benefit payments;
- post-retirement work and earnings;
- the death of an annuitant;
- changes in marital status;
- a child leaving the care of a spouse or widow(er);
- a student ceasing full-time attendance.

The following questions and answers describe how these events affect railroad retirement benefits and what should be done to prevent overpayments.

1. How can the award of social security benefits result in a railroad retirement annuity overpayment?

The tier I portion of a railroad retirement annuity is based on both the railroad retirement and social security credits acquired by an employee and reflects what social security would pay if railroad work were covered by social security. Tier I benefits are, therefore, reduced by the amount of any actual social security benefit paid on the basis of nonrailroad employment, in order to prevent a duplication of benefits based on the same earnings.

The tier I dual benefit reduction also applies to the annuity of an employee qualified for social security benefits on the earnings record of another person, such as a spouse. And, the tier I portion of a spouse or survivor annuity is reduced for any social security entitlement, even if the social security benefit is based on the spouse's or survivor's own earnings. These reductions follow principles of social security law which, in effect, limit payment to the higher of any two or more benefits payable to an individual at one time.

Since 1975, if a railroad retirement annuitant is also awarded a social security benefit, the Social Security Administration determines the amount due, but a combined monthly dual benefit payment should, in most cases, be issued by the Railroad Retirement Board after the railroad retirement annuity has been reduced for the social security benefit.

A person should notify the Board when he or she files for social security benefits. If the Social Security Administration begins paying benefits directly to a railroad retirement annuitant without the Board's knowledge, an overpayment will occur. This frequently happens when a railroad employee's spouse or widow(er) is awarded social security benefits not based on the employee's earnings.

Also, annuitants who are receiving their social security benefits directly from the Social Security Administration must notify the Board if their social security benefits are subsequently increased for any reason other than annual cost-of-living increases, such as a recomputation to reflect post-retirement earnings. As such recomputations are usually retroactive, they can result in substantial overpayments.

While social security benefit information is provided to the Railroad Retirement Board as a result of routine information exchanges between the Board and the Social Security Administration, it will generally not be provided in time to avoid such a benefit overpayment.

2. What other types of benefit payments, besides social security benefits, require dual benefit reductions in a railroad retirement annuity?

For employees first eligible for a railroad retirement annuity and a Federal, State or local government pension after 1985, there may be a reduction in tier I for receipt of a public pension based, in part or in whole, on employment not covered by social security or railroad retirement after 1956. This also applies to certain other payments not covered by social security, such as payments from a non-profit organization or from a foreign government or a foreign employer. However, it does not include military service pensions, payments by the Department of Veterans Affairs, or certain benefits payable by a foreign government as a result of a totalization agreement between that government and the United States.

The tier I portion of a spouse or widow(er)'s annuity may also be reduced for receipt of any Federal, State or local pension separately payable to the spouse or widow(er) based on her or his own earnings. The reduction generally does not apply if the employment on which the public pension is based was covered under the Social Security Act throughout the last 60 months of public employment. (This 60-month requirement is being phased in over a 5-year period ending March 1, 2009, and there are some exceptions.) In addition, most military service pensions and payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs will not cause a reduction.

If an employee is receiving a disability annuity, tier I benefits for the employee and spouse may, under certain circumstances, be reduced for receipt of workers' compensation or public disability benefits.

If annuitants become entitled to any of the above payments, they should promptly notify the Board. If there is any question as to whether a payment requires a reduction in an annuity, a Board field office should be contacted.

3. Can earnings cause railroad retirement overpayments?

Unreported post-retirement work and earnings in nonrailroad employment are a major cause of overpay-

ments in railroad retirement annuities. Like social security benefits, railroad retirement tier I benefits and vested dual benefits paid to employees and spouses, plus tier I, tier II, and vested dual benefits paid to survivors, are subject to earnings deductions if post-retirement earnings exceed certain exempt amounts, which increase annually.

These earnings deductions do not apply to those who have attained full social security retirement age. Full retirement age for employees and spouses ranges from age 65 for those born before 1938 to age 67 for those born in 1960 or later. Full retirement age for survivor annuitants ranges from age 65 for those born before 1940 to age 67 for those born in 1962 or later.

For those under full retirement age throughout 2005, the exempt earnings amount is \$12,000. For beneficiaries attaining full retirement age in 2005, the exempt earnings amount is \$31,800 for the months before the month full retirement age is attained.

For those under full retirement age throughout the year, the earnings deduction is \$1 in benefits for every \$2 of earnings over the exempt amount. For those attaining full retirement age in 2005, the deduction is \$1 for every \$3 of earnings over the exempt amount in the months before the month full retirement age is attained.

Annuitants who work after retirement and expect that their earnings for a year will be more than the annual exempt amount must promptly notify the nearest Board field office and furnish an estimate of their expected earnings. This way their annuities can be adjusted to take the excess earnings into consideration and prevent an overpayment. Annuitants whose original estimate changes significantly during the year, either upwards or downwards, should also notify the Board.

Retired employees and spouses, regardless of age, who work for their last pre-retirement nonrailroad employer are also subject to an earnings deduction in their tier II and supplemental benefits of \$1 for every \$2 in earnings up to a maximum reduction of 50 percent. This earnings restriction does not change from year to year and does not allow for an exempt amount. Retired employees and spouses should therefore promptly notify the Board if they return to employment for their last pre-retirement nonrailroad employer, or if the amount of their earnings from such employment changes.

A spouse benefit is subject to reductions not only for the spouse's earnings, but also for the earnings of the employee, regardless of whether the earnings are from service for the last pre-retirement nonrailroad employer or any other post-retirement employment.

4. How do post-retirement earnings affect disability annuities?

Special restrictions limiting earnings to \$400 per month, exclusive of dis-

ability-related work expenses, apply to disabled railroad retirement employee annuitants.

In addition, any work performed by a disabled annuitant may be considered an indication of an individual's recovery from disability, regardless of the amount of earnings. Therefore, any earnings by a disability annuitant must be reported promptly to avoid potential overpayments.

These disability work restrictions apply until the disabled employee annuitant attains full retirement age. This transition is effective no earlier than full retirement age even if the annuitant had 30 years of service. Also, a disabled employee annuitant who works for his or her last pre-retirement nonrailroad employer would be subject to the additional earnings deduction that applies in these cases.

5. What effect does railroad work have on an annuity?

No railroad retirement annuity is payable for any month in which an employee, spouse or survivor annuitant performs compensated service for a railroad or railroad union. This includes local lodge compensation totaling \$25 or more for any calendar month, and work by a local lodge or division secretary collecting insurance premiums, regardless of the amount of salary.

6. What should be done when a railroad retirement annuitant dies?

The Board should be notified immediately upon the death of any retirement or survivor annuitant. Payment of a railroad retirement annuity stops upon an annuitant's death and the annuity is not payable for any day in the month of death. This is true regardless of how late in the month death occurs and there is no provision for prorating such a payment. Any payments received after the annuitant's death must be returned. The sooner the Board is notified, the less chance there is of payments continuing and an overpayment accruing. The Board would also determine whether any survivor benefits due are payable by the Board or the Social Security Administration.

7. What are some other events that can affect payments to auxiliary beneficiaries, such as spouses and widow(er)s?

A spouse or divorced spouse must immediately notify the Board if the railroad employee upon whose service the annuity is based dies. A spouse must notify the Board if her or his marriage ends in divorce or annulment and a widow(er) or divorced spouse must notify the Board if she or he remarries.

Also, benefits paid to spouses, widow(er)s and surviving divorced spouses that are based on the beneficiary caring for an unmarried child of the employee are normally terminated by the Board when the child attains age 18 (16 for a surviving divorced spouse) or if a disabled child over age 18 (16 for a surviving divorced spouse) recov-



GIA Dialogue

Patience and caring during the holiday season

By Mary Anna Mullins

Chaplain, Grand International Auxiliary

As a young person growing up in the country, my father's work permitted him to always be home every night and all holidays. I attended school in town, and crossed the railroad track each day as I walked to my classes. In those days, railroad workers were "looked down upon" by some as being an inferior class of people because of their menial labor, their traveling to and from working areas, and the type of clothing they wore — mostly overalls, which were usually dirty from coal dust and soot, an engineer's cap and a bandana tied around his neck. However, I wondered why this feeling of inferiority, as the men always wore big smiles and blew the train's whistle — to me, they were very friendly, polite people.

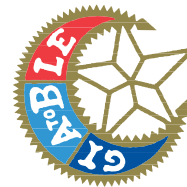
A few years later, as I had grown to adulthood, what did I do but marry a railroad man! I learned first hand what being a railroad spouse really meant — after having grown up in a close family atmosphere where all members were home nights and holidays, it was a big adjustment for me, being home alone most of the time, both day and night, and always spending holidays without my railroader — it seemed he was always called out at those special times when being with family was very important.

The advantage was that I became a very independent person, and as our two girls grew up, I found myself the sole disciplinarian and decision-maker for the family most of the time. Many times, when the girls had school functions involving parents, I played

the dual role of father *and* mother.

Being very family oriented, we planned our own Christmas holidays around our railroader's schedule so that we could have time together; celebrations with other members of our family were then carried out in traditional ways. We were a close, loving family and strived to maintain that meaningful level of closeness by adjusting our time however necessary to benefit all family members.

Many facets of a railroad family's life require adjustments, patience and a caring attitude in order to maintain a harmonious atmosphere for all concerned — especially during the holiday season. It is true that the life of a railroad family is like no other — but with sincere effort, it can be a very rewarding, happy life! •



Railroad Retirement Board announces benefit increases

Most railroad retirement annuities, like social security benefits, are scheduled to increase in January 2006 on the basis of the rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) during the 12 months preceding October 2005.

Cost-of-living increases are calculated in both the tier I and tier II benefits included in a railroad retirement annuity. Tier I benefits, like social security benefits, will increase by 4.1 percent, which is the percentage of the CPI rise. Tier II benefits will increase by 1.3 percent, which is 32.5 percent of the CPI rise. The vested dual benefit payments and supplemental annuities also paid by the Railroad Retirement Board are not adjusted for the CPI rise.

In January 2006, the average regular railroad retirement employee annuity will increase \$55 a month to \$1,788 and the average of combined benefits for an employee and spouse will increase \$76 a month to \$2,501. For those aged widow(er)s eligible for an increase, the average annuity will increase \$33 a month to \$938. However, widow(er)s whose annuities are being paid under the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001 will not receive annual cost-of-living adjustments until their annuity amount is exceeded by the amount that would have been paid under prior law, counting all interim cost-of-living increases otherwise payable. Almost 33

percent of the widow(er)s on the Board's rolls are being paid under the 2001 law.

If a railroad retirement or survivor annuitant also receives a social security or other government benefit, such as a public service pension or another railroad retirement annuity, the increased tier I benefit is reduced by the increased government benefit. However, tier II cost-of-living increases are not reduced by increases in other government benefits. If a widow(er) whose annuity is being paid under the 2001 law is also entitled to an increased government benefit, her or his railroad retirement survivor annuity may decrease.

However, the total amount of the combined railroad retirement widow(er)'s annuity and other government benefits will not be less than the total payable before the cost-of-living increase and before increased Medicare premium deductions.

For those beneficiaries covered by Medicare, the basic Part B premium generally deducted from monthly benefits increases from \$78.20 to \$88.50 in 2006.

In late December the Railroad Retirement Board will mail notices to all annuitants providing a breakdown of the annuity rates payable to them in January 2006. •

Changes will allow retirees to earn more in 2006 under Railroad Retirement

Those railroad retirement annuitants subject to earnings restrictions can earn more in 2006 without having their benefits reduced, as a result of increases in earnings limits indexed to average national wage increases.

Like social security benefits, some railroad retirement benefit payments are subject to deductions if an annuitant's earnings exceed certain exempt amounts. These earnings restrictions apply to those who have not attained full social security retirement age. For employee and spouse annuitants, full retirement age ranges from age 65 for those born before 1938 to age 67 for those born in 1960 or later. For survivor annuitants, full retirement age ranges from age 65 for those born before 1940 to age 67 for those born in

1962 or later.

For those under full retirement age throughout 2006, the exempt earnings amount rises to \$12,480 from \$12,000 in 2005. For beneficiaries attaining full retirement age in 2006, the exempt earnings amount, for the months before the month full retirement age is attained, rises to \$33,240 in 2006 from \$31,800 in 2005.

For those under full retirement age, the earnings deduction is \$1 in benefits for every \$2 of earnings over the exempt amount. For those attaining full retirement age in 2006, the deduction is \$1 for every \$3 of earnings over the exempt amount in the months before the month full retirement age is attained.

When applicable, these earnings deductions are assessed on the tier I

and vested dual benefit portions of railroad retirement employee and spouse annuities, and the tier I, tier II, and vested dual benefit portions of survivor benefits.

All earnings received for services rendered, plus any net earnings from self-employment, are considered when assessing deductions for earnings. Interest, dividends, certain rental income, or income from stocks, bonds, or other investments are not considered earnings for this purpose.

Retired employees and spouses, regardless of age, who work for their last pre-retirement nonrailroad employer are also subject to an additional earnings deduction, in their tier II and supplemental benefits, of \$1 for every \$2 in earnings up to a maximum reduc-

tion of 50 percent. This earnings restriction does not change from year to year and does not allow for an exempt amount.

A spouse benefit is subject to reduction not only for the spouse's earnings, but also for the earnings of the employee, regardless of whether the earnings are from service for the last pre-retirement nonrailroad employer or other post-retirement employment.

Special work restrictions applicable to disability annuitants do not change in 2006.

Regardless of age and/or earnings, no railroad retirement annuity is payable for any month in which an annuitant (retired employee, spouse or survivor) works for a railroad employer or railroad union. •

Retirement Benefits

Continued from Page 6

ers from the disability. Therefore, the Board must be notified if the child leaves the beneficiary's care or marries.

Benefits are also payable to an unmarried child age 18 in full-time attendance at an elementary or secondary school or in approved home schooling until the student attains age 19 or the end of the school term in progress when the student attains age 19. (In most cases where a student attains age 19 during the school term, benefits are limited to the two months following the month age 19 is attained.) The Board

must be notified if the student marries, graduates, or ceases full-time attendance.

8. Can an annuitant contest a decision that he or she has been overpaid?

Annuitants who believe a decision regarding a benefit overpayment is incorrect may ask for reconsideration and/or waiver of the overpayment.

If not satisfied with the initial review, the annuitant may appeal to the Board's Bureau of Hearings and Appeals. Further appeals can be carried to the three-member Board itself, and beyond the Board to Federal courts. Annuitants are told about these appeal rights any time a decision is made regarding a benefit overpayment.

9. How can an annuitant find out if an event might affect his or her railroad retirement benefit payments?

Annuitants should contact the nearest field office of the Board for information. If they write they should be sure to include their railroad retirement claim number. In any situation, the best rule is "If in doubt, report."

Annuitants can find the address and phone number of the Board office serving their area by calling the automated RRB Help Line at (800) 808-0772. They can also get this information from the Board's Web site at www.rrb.gov. Most Board offices are open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays. •

BLET NEWS

A message from Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa

Funding Amtrak, rail security



Corporate Greed

The double threat that U.S. workers are facing from cheap labor overseas and greedy executives here at home made headlines recently when the Delphi Corp. — the world's second largest auto parts manufacturer — announced it was filing for bankruptcy on October 8.

Prior to bankruptcy filing, Delphi sought concessions from the UAW, including a wage cut of up to 63 percent and sharp increases in employee-paid health care. The company plans to use bankruptcy laws to close plants and impose lower wages and benefits on workers.

At the same time Delphi was bringing the hammer down on its workers, the company sweetened the severance packages for its top 21 salaried executives. The company had the gall to announce that executives who leave the company will receive 18 months of salary and bonuses instead of the 12 months they previously received.

Once again, U.S. workers are losing their livelihoods on an unfair playing field and face the humiliation of executives lining their pockets on the way out the door.

Amtrak Funding

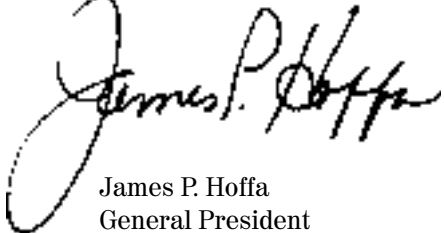
Recently President Bush signed into legislation a funding package for Amtrak for the 2006 fiscal year. Although this is good news in the short term, it doesn't address the long-term funding packages we have been proposing.

Without a funding package that

covers several years, our members on Amtrak, both in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division, are still vulnerable to threats of cuts from a hostile White House. President Bush and his friends have made it clear that they would prefer to dismantle the Amtrak system — selling off lucrative portions of the Northeast to their friends. We need to keep a vigilant watch on this White House's proposals for Amtrak.

Funding for security measures for rail transportation continues to languish as well. After our publication of our report, "High Alert: Workers Warn of Security Breaches on the Nation's Railroads," there has been renewed interest by lawmakers in rail security, or the lack thereof. However, the Bush White House continues to pour funds into security for the airline industry. To date, the disparity between the funds allocated for rail and port security is acute. Rail security receives four percent of the funds funneled to airlines. Yet, rails account for over five-times as many daily passengers as airlines.

I urge you to contact your congressmen and ask them to demand increased funding for rail security measures and a long-term funding solution for Amtrak.


James P. Hoffa
General President

DECEMBER 2005 CALENDAR & EVENTS

JUNE 4-9, 2006... 79th Annual BLET-GIA Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA)

Hosted by SMA Chairman T.L. Reed and the members of BLET Division 205, the 79th annual SMA will be held at the Chattanooga Marriott at the Convention Center in Chattanooga, Tenn. More information to come when available.

JUNE 12-16, 2006... 68th Annual BLET-GIA Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA)

Hosted by EUMA Arrangements Chairman R.J. Chapter and the members of BLET Division 157, the 68th annual EUMA will be held at the Tropicana Casino & Resort on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City, N.J. More details to come.

JUNE 19-22, 2006... BLET National Division Convention, Las Vegas, Nevada

The First Quadrennial Convention of the BLET National Division will be held at Bally's in Las Vegas. More details to come when available.

JUNE 25-29, 2006... 27th IBT International Convention, Las Vegas, Nevada

The 27th International Convention of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters will be held at Bally's in Las Vegas. More details to come when available.

JULY 18-23, 2006... 66th Annual BLET-GIA International Western Convention (IWC)

Hosted by S.V. Hallbrook and the members of BLET Division 94, the 66th annual IWC will be held at the Holiday Inn Rapid City—Rushmore Plaza in Rapid City, S.D. More details to come when available.

AUGUST 20-24, 2006... 71st Annual BLET-GIA Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM)

Hosted by A.L. Williams and the members of BLET Division 182, the 71st annual SWCM will be held at The Peabody Little Rock in Little Rock, Ark. More details to come.

Advisory Board October Activity

In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members' activities are published monthly:

- National President Don M. Hahs**—National Division office: General supervision of BLET activities; General office duties; Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM), Oklahoma City; Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC) meeting, Washington, D.C.; Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) General Committee of Adjustment meeting, Las Vegas; International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) Election Training, Las Vegas; BLET historical award presentation, Venice, Fla.; BLET Advisory Board meeting, Las Vegas; Division 271 annual informational mtg., Greenup, Ky.
- First Vice-President & Alternate President Edward W. Rodzicz**—Assisted President in general operation of National Division Office; Vice President assignments; Special Representative assignments; Organizing department; Shortline department; Passenger department; Various correspondence & phone calls.
- National Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert**—General supervision of BLET financial, record depts.; ND office; BLET Education & Training Dept.; Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Safety Task Force; Meetings with vendors and financial institutions; SWCM, Oklahoma City; BNSF-ATSF GCoA mtg., Las Vegas; General Chairmen Mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas.
- Vice-President Paul T. Sorrow**—CSX Western Lines GCoA mtg.; Mtgs. w/ CSX General Chairmen regarding dual track bargaining; Public Law Board 1063, NS; CSX Family Day event, Greenwood, S.C.; Mtg. w/ President Hahs; Assisted Grand Trunk Western GCA for planning session with upcoming negotiations and day-to-day issues; Assisted CSX, NS and GTW committees and performed general office duties.
- Vice-President Richard K. Radek**—ND Office; BLET Decertification Helpline services; Director of Arbitration Dept; National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB); Illinois Central; Wisconsin Central; Indiana Harbor Belt; METRA; Bell Rwy. of Chicago; Paducah & Louisville; Chicago Central & Pacific; SWCM, Oklahoma City; Metra mtg., re: Metra accident; CN/WC contract negotiations; NRAB arbitration; Metra E.T. mtg.; Div. 815 mtg.; Contract negotiations; Mtgs. re: 9-17-05 Metra accident; General Chairmen's Mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; Various mtgs. in connection with 9-17 Metra accident; CN/IC contract negotiations; FRA Part 240.409 dockets this month: EQAL 01-16 (CSX).
- Vice-President Dale McPherson**—CP Rail; Port. Term. RR; Longview Portland & Northern; Longview Switching Co.; Indiana RR; W&LE RR; Utah Railroad; UP Eastern Dist.; UP former CNW; DM&IR RR; Portland & Western RR; Great Western RR; Appalachian & Ohio RR; Public Law Boards 5604, 5681, 5721, 6040, 6281, 6558, 6589; UP work/rest projects; RSAC positive train control cmt.; National wage/rules; General office duties, telephone, correspondence; Arbitration, PLB 6449 and 6440, UP, Cheyenne; National wage/rule contract mtgs., Washington, D.C.; Portland & Western contract mtgs., Salem, Ore; National Association of Railroad Arbitrators mtg., Chicago.
- Vice-President & U.S. Nat'l Legislative Representative Raymond A. Holmes**—BLET Washington D.C. office; General office duties, telephone, correspondence; BLET General Chairmen's mtg., Las Vegas; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas.
- Vice-President Merle W. Geiger Jr.**—Assigned to: BLET Trainmen's Department; Kansas City Southern; Gateway Western; Midsouth Rail; Southrail; Texas-Mexican Rwy.; Springfield Terminal, Delaware & Hudson; Indiana & Ohio RR; Louisville & Indiana RR; St. Lawrence & Atlantic RR; Indiana Southern RR; Preparation for Public Law Board (PLB); PLB 6884 (KCS) session, Chicago; International Fatigue Management Conference, Seattle; Research, correspondence and general office duties.
- Vice-President Stephen D. Speagle**—Assigned to Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Montana Rail Link, Pacific Harbor Line; Missouri & Northern Arkansas (M&NA); SWCM, Oklahoma City; Wabash Hospital Association mtg.; PLB 6540, Sparks, Nevada; BNSF-Santa Fe General Committee mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas.
- Vice-President E.L. "Lee" Pruitt**—Assisted general chairmen & members of: UP-Western Lines; UP-Western Region; UP-Central Region; UP-Southern Region; UP-Tacoma Belt; General office duties, telephone paperwork; UPCR GC Rightnowar, auto-markup arbitration, Boston; PTC symposium, Washington, D.C.; UPWL and UPWR arbitration boards 180, 4450, 4451 and 4452, Detroit, Mich; Arbitration Board 6833 & 6834, assisting UPSR GC Gore, New Orleans; Trip rates, assisting UPWL GC Hannah, Colton, Calif.; Ebb & flow negotiations, assisting UPWL GC Hannah, San Antonio; Office, paper, filing, STD and calls, assisting.
- Vice-President Paul L. Wingo Jr.**—Assigned to NS-Southern Lines and Eastern Region GCoAs; Meridian Southern; New York Susquehanna & Western; New England Central; BLET Rail Security Officer; SWCM, Oklahoma City; General Chairmen's mtg. and Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; NYSW contract negotiations, Binghamton, NY; Division 198 mtg; Security project and conference with FRA Security Office; General office duties.

SAFETY TASK FORCE HOTLINE
(800) 306-5414



Report major accidents when they happen



LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN NEWS
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen
A Division of the Rail Conference, International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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