



RRB News

U.S. Railroad Retirement Board

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Benefit Rate Increase for Railroad Unemployment and Sickness Benefits

The maximum daily benefit rate payable for claims under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act increases to \$64 from \$61 in the new benefit year, which begins July 1, 2009. Benefits are normally paid for the number of days of unemployment or sickness over four in 14-day registration periods, so maximum benefits for biweekly claims will total \$640.

During the first 14-day claim period in a benefit year, benefits are payable for each day of unemployment or sickness in excess of seven, rather than four, which, in effect, provides a one-week waiting period. Initial sickness claims must also begin with four consecutive days of sickness. However, only one waiting period is required during any period of continuing unemployment or sickness, even if that period continues into a subsequent benefit year. Claimants already on the rolls will, therefore, normally not be required to serve another waiting period because of the onset of the new benefit year.

To qualify for normal railroad unemployment or sickness benefits in the benefit year beginning July 1, 2009, an employee must have had railroad earnings of at least \$3,200 in calendar year 2008, not counting more than \$1,280 for any month. Those who were first employed in the rail industry in 2008 must also have at least five months of creditable railroad service in 2008.

Under certain conditions, employees with 10 or more years of service who do not qualify in the new benefit year on the basis of their 2008 earnings may still be able to receive benefits after June 30, 2009. Ten-year employees who received normal benefits in the benefit year ending June 30, 2009, might still be eligible for extended benefits, and ten-year employees may be eligible for accelerated benefits if they have rail earnings of at least \$3,325 in 2009, not counting earnings of more than \$1,330 a month.

(More)

Application forms for unemployment and sickness benefits may be obtained from railroad employers, railroad labor organizations, any Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) office, or the agency's Web site at www.rrb.gov. Also, as an alternative to applying for unemployment benefits through the mail, unemployment claimants can instead file applications online. Likewise, subsequent biweekly claims for unemployment benefits may be filed online rather than through the mail and employees can also access information about their individual railroad unemployment insurance account statements online. These account statements provide a summary of the unemployment and sickness benefits paid under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act to rail employees.

To access these online services, employees must first establish an RRB Internet Services account. For security purposes, first time users must apply for a Password Request Code, which they will receive by mail in about 10 business days. To do this, employees should click on "Benefit Online Services" and select "request a PRC." Once employees establish their online accounts, they will be able to file their applications and biweekly claims for unemployment benefits as well as conduct other business with the RRB over the Internet. Employees are encouraged to initiate an online account while still employed so the account is established if they ever need to use these or other select RRB Internet services. Employees who have already established online accounts do not need to do so again. Although claimants cannot currently file applications or biweekly claims for railroad sickness benefits over the Internet, the RRB is planning to add the online filing of sickness claims in the future.

Claimants with questions about unemployment or sickness benefits should contact an RRB office by calling toll free at 1-877-772-5772. Claimants can also find the address of the RRB office serving their area and get information about their claims and benefit payments by calling this toll-free number. Most RRB offices are open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays. Field office locations can also be found by visiting www.rrb.gov.

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