



# Transportation Occupation Handbook



**UNITED TRANSPORTATION UNION**  
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[www.utu.org](http://www.utu.org)



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## INTRODUCTION

The transportation industry, one of the most vitally important industries in the world, moves the raw materials and intermediate and finished products on which standards of living and economic growth depend. It provides hundreds of thousands of jobs and makes possible the free flow of goods and people.

The United Transportation Union is a proud and vital part of the transportation industry. The dedicated men and women comprising its membership keep the wheels of transport moving efficiently. The efforts of the UTU before state and federal governments and in the workplace benefit not only its own members but also working people everywhere.

This booklet outlines the background of the UTU and its objectives, purposes and structure. It also describes the jobs and working conditions of employees represented by the UTU.

**Copies of this booklet are available without charge from the United Transportation Union Public Relations Department, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250. Telephone (216) 228-9400; e-mail: [pr@utu.org](mailto:pr@utu.org).**



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## A HISTORY OF RAILWAY LABOR AND THE UTU

Railroading has always been an extremely dangerous occupation. In the late 1800s, almost one-third of all brakemen were killed or maimed each year and an estimated 70% of all train crew members could expect to be crippled within five working years.

Wages were extremely low. Employees averaged a little more than one dollar a day. Pay raises were infrequent. There were no seniority rights, no limits on the number of working hours, and workers could be fired at any time for any reason. Because of the hazards of their work, railroaders could not get life insurance. They had no way to recover damages for injury or death caused by employer negligence.

These extreme conditions prompted concerned workers to meet secretly to discuss ways to improve security, wages and work conditions. Despite threats of job loss and blacklisting, railroaders began to form fraternal associations. Engineers and conductors were the first to form organizations in the 1860s, followed by firemen, trainmen and switchmen a few years later.

Most of these early brotherhoods formed to provide otherwise unobtainable health, injury and life insurance for the families of railroaders. They also fought for safer working conditions, better rates of pay and fair treatment. In time, they won established procedures for contract negotiation and grievance resolution.

Just before the turn of the 20th century, unionism was spreading fast. One man whose reputation grew with the movement was Eugene V. Debs, an officer of the firemen's brotherhood (a UTU predecessor). Believing that all brotherhoods of the railroad industry should unite, he organized the American Railway Union in 1893. His ideal was crushed, however, when the U.S. government called in armed troops to help the railroads put down a strike. Over the years, the brotherhoods continued to work for their memberships, winning such benefits as the eight-hour work day, standardized pay with regular raises, specified working conditions, a government-supervised retirement system, a health and welfare plan, the right to bargain collectively and freedom from discrimination because of union membership.

In 1968, officers of railroad brotherhoods representing operating employees met to explore the possibility of joining strengths. The time was right and the United Transportation Union came into being. The UTU was founded on January 1, 1969, when four railroad brotherhoods – the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, the Brotherhood of

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Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, the Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen, and the Switchmen's Union of North America – united to more effectively represent their joint interests. In 1970, the International Association of Railway Employees became a part of the UTU, and in 1985 the Railroad Yardmasters of America voted to affiliate with the UTU.

Today, UTU members work in more than 30 different railroad, bus, commuter, transit, airline and other transportation occupations. They belong to approximately 612 locals throughout the United States and Canada. Built on the lessons of the past and the wisdom of Eugene Debs, the UTU still adheres to the beliefs of its founding members and officers:

*“We have united to improve our strengths. We have united to save our energy for constructive purposes – to end the battle of craft against craft, working man against working man. We have united to bring the combined strength of operating men together to give better representation through legislation and negotiation.”*



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## UTU MEMBER BENEFITS

As participants in one of the most effective unions in all of organized labor, UTU members have the benefit of many years of successful representation in government and in national collective bargaining negotiations. As a result, UTU members enjoy some of the highest standards of living in organized labor.

**EXCELLENT WAGES.** UTU members are among the best paid employees in organized labor.

**SENIORITY RIGHTS.** The longer a UTU member works, the better his or her choice of jobs and working locations. Seniority also means increased protection against layoffs.

**ESTABLISHED RULES AND PROCEDURES.** Every UTU rail member is covered by a contract that specifies job responsibilities, working conditions and pay. It is legally enforceable through established grievance procedures. Bus and other members also derive their grievance rights from their labor agreements.

**HOURS OF SERVICE LIMITS.** Under federal law, UTU rail members working under the Hours of Service Act cannot be forced to work more than 12 hours a day and they must have time off for meals and rest. Bus, airline and other members' hours also are governed by federal regulations.

**VACATIONS AND HOLIDAYS.** UTU members enjoy paid holidays and paid annual vacations, based upon length of employment and the negotiated labor agreement.

**HEALTH AND WELFARE BENEFITS.** UTU rail members have comprehensive health and dental insurance plans, as well as unemployment and sickness benefits to protect them in case of layoff or prolonged illness. Bus and other transportation members also enjoy many of these benefits, depending upon the labor agreement.

**EXPERIENCED REPRESENTATION.** UTU members are represented on a local, state-wide and national basis by leaders experienced in negotiation and thoroughly familiar with all aspects of labor law, contracts, work rules and national labor trends.

**LEGISLATIVE STRENGTH.** The UTU's strong legislative department functions not only through elected representatives but also through member participation in the UTU Political Action Committee,

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a voluntary political action group that works on behalf of transportation labor interests at the local, state and federal levels.

**UNION INSURANCE.** The UTU Insurance Association (UTUIA) offers a wide range of affordable, voluntary life and disability insurance products and savings plans to its members and their families. In fact, UTUIA is among North America's highest rated insurance companies. Products include income-replacement policies in case of disability, policies to cover costs associated with the treatment of cancer, and accidental death or dismemberment protections.

The UTUIA Scholarship Program provides members, their children and grandchildren with financial assistance for college. Each year, the UTUIA awards 50 continuing \$500 scholarships to UTU or UTUIA-insured members, their children or grandchildren, or the child of a deceased UTU or UTUIA-insured member. Recipients are expected to maintain a satisfactory academic record to keep the scholarship for the full four years.

**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE.** UTU initiatives have guided employer-financed programs that give many members access to alcohol, drug, individual and family counseling.

**UTU FOR LIFE.** Retired members, their spouses or their widows/widowers are eligible to enroll in the UTU for Life, a program of benefits including continued receipt of the UTU's monthly publication, the *UTU News*; an annual calendar; discounts on car rentals; a free medical emergency card; group travel packages; financial- and health-record booklets; an important documents folder and chapter meetings that help keep retirees informed and active.

## **UTU ORGANIZATION / SERVICES**

The United Transportation Union has a guiding purpose: to represent transportation service employees and to promote their general welfare, social, moral, intellectual, economic and political interests. It is governed by a constitution which spells out union laws and how they shall be applied.

All UTU officers are elected from the membership. Over the years, they have worked on properties where the UTU holds contracts and have acquired and accrue seniority on rosters of their crafts. Where necessary, officers are bonded to assure fiduciary responsibility to the members they represent.



The International consists of one delegate from each local and elected officers and boards. Delegates are elected to attend quadrennial

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conventions where they, in turn, elect International officers and board members to serve four-year terms. Delegates also amend the UTU Constitution and establish policies that govern the union between conventions.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT.** The International president exercises general executive and administrative control of daily union activities, supervises officers and employees, interprets union laws, resolves all disputes and presides at conventions.

**ASSISTANT PRESIDENT.** The assistant president works with the International president in establishing all policies and programs of the UTU and pursues other matters assigned by the International president.

**GENERAL SECRETARY AND TREASURER.** As chief financial officer of the union, the general secretary and treasurer collects all money and pays all bills, countersigns checks, documents and charters and keeps accurate financial records. He or she also files all required reports, assists with convention arrangements and performs other duties assigned by the convention or the International president.

**NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR (U.S. or Canada).** As the chief legislative and political officer, the national legislative director coordinates activities of state or provincial legislative directors, acts as a liaison with national lawmakers, keeps voting records on legislators and furnishes recommendations and reports to the International president and the membership.

**VICE PRESIDENTS.** Vice presidents, maintaining headquarters in various areas of the United States and Canada, act as field agents, carrying out contract or grievance resolution or other assignments as directed by the International president.

**VICE PRESIDENT-BUS DEPARTMENT.** This vice president handles the affairs of the UTU Bus Department, including overseeing negotiations on wages and working conditions for UTU-represented bus operators, mechanics and related occupations, and other matters.

**VICE PRESIDENT-COMMUTER RAIL.** Delegates to the UTU's eighth convention in 1999 voted to create the position of vice president for rail commuter service to better serve the union's expanding rail commuter membership, which now totals more than 10,000 individuals.

**VICE PRESIDENT-YARDMASTERS.** This individual handles the affairs of the UTU Yardmaster Department, including yardmaster contracts, insurance matters and major grievances.

**ALTERNATE VICE PRESIDENTS.** Alternate vice presidents, elected at the convention by geographic districts, are called upon to replace vice presidents in the event of resignation, retirement or death. They also

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may be assigned to help in contract negotiations or other disputes.

### **INTERMEDIATE OFFICERS**

**GENERAL CHAIRPERSONS.** General chairpersons head general committees of adjustment. They handle all claims, grievances and disciplinary matters for a region or an employer, with authority to make and interpret contracts on work rules and pay rates. They also negotiate with management on a regional or system level. An Association of General Chairpersons also assists the International president and staff in formulating demands relating to wages, rules and working conditions for all the crafts and in handling wage and rules negotiations with employers.

**STATE AND PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTORS.** These individuals keep in close contact with local lawmakers and attend sessions of state or provincial legislative bodies to promote the political and legislative interests of UTU members.

### **LOCAL OFFICERS**

The United Transportation Union has approximately 612 locals in the United States and Canada. The locals are generally headquartered at terminals or division points.

**LOCAL PRESIDENT.** The local president presides at meetings, appoints committees, countersigns documents and checks, files necessary reports, resolves disputes and supervises all affairs of the local.

**LOCAL SECRETARY.** The local secretary records meeting actions, signs and seals documents, handles correspondence, election and assessment notices, and files required reports.

**LOCAL TREASURER.** The local treasurer collects dues, disburses funds, keeps accurate records and files all financial reports required by law.

**LOCAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE.** The local legislative representative attends state legislative board meetings and promotes legislation to remedy unacceptable working conditions.

**LOCAL CHAIRPERSON.** The local chairperson heads a local committee of adjustment that handles claims, grievances, disciplinary cases and disputes with management officials.

**LOCAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES.** Trustees of each local supervise financial affairs including an annual audit, oversee bonding and handle rent, lease or purchase of property and equipment.

### **HANDLING MEMBER GRIEVANCES AND REQUESTS**

Every UTU local elects a local committee of adjustment, headed by a local chairperson, to handle grievance matters for the seniority district

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the local represents. Grievances may include contract violations, discipline, safety matters and working conditions.

Locals also may ask for improvements in working conditions by conveying a request to the general chairperson, who is authorized to review the existing contract, decide on the merits of the request, and pursue it with company officials.

The Railway Labor Act requires that rail and airline unions follow a specific procedure on grievances involving the violation or application of rules or working conditions. A member with such a grievance must present it to the local. If it is determined to have merit, the grievance is referred to the chairperson of the local committee of adjustment who will try to reach a satisfactory resolution with employer representatives in the area.

If the matter cannot be settled, the local may refer the grievance to the general committee of adjustment for handling with higher company officials. By law, the general committee is the only agent authorized to handle grievances with the highest level of company officials.

If no adjustment is reached at this stage, the general committee may elect to pursue the matter further by taking it before the National Railroad Adjustment Board, a public law board or a special board of adjustment. All of these boards were created by national legislation.

When the membership desires a change in the existing local agreements covering rates of pay, work rules or working conditions, the general chairperson serves notice for specific changes or for new rules. If no agreement is reached in conferences between the general committee and management representatives, the committee may request assistance from the International President. If there is still no settlement, the UTU can request the assistance of the National Mediation Board.

UTU bus and other transportation general and local chairpersons are guided by their individual labor agreements in the matter of grievance handling and arbitration. Bus and other non-rail and non-airline transportation agreements also come under the scope of the National Labor Relations Act.

### **DEPARTMENTS OF THE UTU INTERNATIONAL**

#### **THE LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT**

The UTU has one of the most extensive legislative organizations in the labor movement. National directors and their staffs are headquartered in Washington, D.C., and Ottawa, Ontario.

In the U.S., 49 of 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, have legislative boards made up of local legislative representatives and headed by a director. Canada's provincial legislative boards, also comprised of local

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representatives, are headed by a chairperson. This efficient legislative organization allows the UTU to mount coordinated campaigns at the federal, state and provincial levels. Among the important laws passed or amended because of UTU action are the Railway Labor Act, the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act, the Railroad Retirement Act, the Federal Employers' Liability Act, the Federal Hours of Service Act, the Rail Safety Act, the Motor Carrier Safety Act, and the Mass Transportation Act.

### **THE YARDMASTER DEPARTMENT**

In 1985, members of the 67-year-old Railroad Yardmasters of America voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with the UTU. The Yardmaster Department handles such matters as yardmasters' grievances and similar duties. It also oversees insurance matters for yardmasters who purchased policies from the RYA before the merger.

### **THE BUS DEPARTMENT**

One of the UTU's founding unions, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, pioneered the organization and representation of bus operators. After organizing interstate operators, the union expanded membership into many city and suburban bus lines. The BRT's bus department, established in 1939, has remained a vitally important department of the UTU. It now represents more than 9,600 members in more than 25 locals, three of which are combined rail/bus locals. Through the bus department, the UTU continues to expand representation of transit system employees and works to bring union protection to airline, school and charter bus drivers, bus mechanics, maintenance personnel and many others.

In the late 1990s, the UTU bus department led a successful campaign to organize the employees of Airport Group International, which employs workers at the Albany, N.Y., international airport. The UTU now represents the interests of employees in the operations, maintenance and parking departments.

### **THE FIELD SERVICE DEPARTMENT**

The Field Service Department coordinates and supervises the assignment of International officers to assist General Committees of Adjustment on railroad and bus properties in the United States and Canada. The department also coordinates and supervises the organizing of rail and bus properties in the United States and Canada. Complete itineraries of assignments are maintained on a week-to-week basis. When strike authority is authorized by the International President, the Field Service Department is responsible for the coordination and implementation of a strike and acts as the liaison between General Committees of Adjustment and the National Mediation Board, or the

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Canada Labour Relations Board.

### **THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT**

The UTU operates under the provisions of numerous laws, from the Railway Labor Act and the Taft-Hartley Act in the U.S. to the Industrial Disputes and Investigation Act in Canada. Legal expertise is necessary for proper action. The union's staff of full-time, trained attorneys assist and advise officers on legal problems and procedures. They also study and counsel union leaders on the intents and purposes of proposed legislation dealing with a variety of matters, including labor relations, hours of service, employee safety, employer's liability, retirement and unemployment benefits, and fraternal insurance.

### **THE RESEARCH AND SCHEDULE DEPARTMENT**

Staying on top of trends and preparing for aggressive action are priorities for the UTU. The Research and Schedule Department does the groundwork that enables the union to serve members' interests by securing and enforcing collective bargaining agreements.

This department compiles and maintains data on rates of pay, work rules, working conditions, decisions and awards in contract disputes, as well as general information concerning the transportation industry. It furnishes regular reports to keep general committees informed, prepares data in preparation for national wage and rules negotiations, and handles contract ratification procedures for rail members.

### **THE UTU POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (UTU PAC)**

The UTU PAC is a voluntary political action committee in the U.S. with more than 23,000 members. Their voluntary contributions are used to help elect state and federal legislators who recognize the needs and problems affecting transportation employees. Candidates from both parties receive UTU PAC assistance on the basis of their past records and their positions on issues vital to the UTU.

Half of all UTU PAC contributions are returned to the state in which the member's local is headquartered to assist candidates for statewide office. The other half of UTU PAC funds support candidates in presidential and congressional elections. In addition, many UTU PAC members participate actively in letter-writing and e-mail campaigns on issues and in voting drives.

### **THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT**

A diversified public relations program is very important to any organization interested in presenting an accurate and favorable image of its work and its members. Present conditions in the transportation industry, in organized labor and in government make the public relations job

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particularly challenging. The Public Relations Department tells the UTU story to people outside the union as well as to its members through official publications, educational and retiree programs and numerous special projects.

*EXTERNAL PUBLIC RELATIONS* efforts connect the UTU to people within and outside the transportation industry by publicizing the union's aims and the contributions of its hardworking members. It is the UTU's policy to make the truth about its purposes and activities known. To accomplish this goal, a full-time staff works closely with the North American media to set up interviews, prepare speeches, and coordinate all activities that insure that accurate and positive information will reach the public.

*UNION PUBLICATIONS* include the *UTU News* and the *UTU News Canada*, supplemented by daily updates posted on the UTU's website at [www.utu.org](http://www.utu.org). These outlets advise active and retired members of union activities, industry news, and public issues important to labor and the transportation industry. Readership also includes government officials, business and transportation executives, libraries and schools.

*EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROGRAMS* are based on the belief that leaders and members informed about changing techniques of collective bargaining, contract enforcement and legislative action are in a better position to work for their individual and collective interests. In support of this aim, the Public Relations Department has issued a series of publications on subjects ranging from safety laws and grievance handling to employee assistance programs and methods for getting a message to lawmakers.

Additionally, an aggressive, comprehensive program to educate officers, members and their families is conducted through the annual regional meetings. In these meetings, officers and members receive up-to-date training in the skills necessary to become and remain successful union officers.

Also at these regional meetings a series of workshops are conducted, called general membership awareness programs, designed to help all officers and members, as well as their families, understand issues affecting transportation workers, their jobs and home lives.

*THE UTU for LIFE PROGRAM*, administered by the Public Relations Department, is a package of benefits for retired transportation workers. Many program members participate in special discount travel excursions and cruises arranged through the Public Relations Department.

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## **MEMBERSHIP SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

One of the newest departments at the International is the Membership Services Department. This department was established to better serve UTU members and/or their families by providing answers to questions regarding the health and welfare plan, dental programs, Board of Appeals decisions, Board of Directors decisions, and interpretations of the UTU Constitution. The department also handles Railroad Retirement Board benefits in conjunction with the Tax Department.

## **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

Since 1969, the UTU has been a leader in developing and implementing programs to help employees obtain confidential assistance in dealing with problems related to drugs and alcohol. These employee-assistance programs, created through joint labor/management participation, now serve workers on more than 40 railroads. Operation RedBlock, jointly initiated by the UTU and other rail-labor organizations, supports existing employee assistance programs through an employee-based information, awareness and prevention effort. Many bus general chairpersons also have negotiated employee assistance programs.

## **THE ASSOCIATION OF GENERAL CHAIRPERSONS**

For rail members, The Association of General Chairpersons, District No. 1, provides advice and cooperation to the International President in carrying out the mandates of the delegates to quadrennial conventions. The Association of General Chairpersons, District No. 2, is comprised of general chairpersons in Canada and advises the Canadian vice president. The Association of General Chairpersons, District No. 3, is made up of general chairpersons from UTU-represented bus and transit properties. It also advises the International President on bus and transit matters.

## **THE ASSOCIATION OF STATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTORS**

The Association of State Legislative Directors, comprised of all directors of state legislative boards, coordinates efforts to secure the enactment of laws and regulations, or the repeal or modification of laws and regulations, to ensure the protection and welfare of the members of the UTU, exchanges information regarding political and legislative activities affecting UTU members, and recommends a legislative agenda for the UTU.



## **UTU INSURANCE ASSOCIATION**

### **THE INSURANCE DEPARTMENT**

Early railroad brotherhoods were formed to provide death and other

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benefits for workers who could not obtain insurance from commercial companies at any price because of their hazardous occupations. Today, UTU carries that tradition forward with its Insurance Department, the non-profit United Transportation Union Insurance Association.

UTUIA comes under the jurisdiction of federal and state regulatory agencies. It operates under the well-accepted legal reserve concept that guarantees financial soundness, and enables UTUIA to offer a wide range of custom-designed, competitive insurance products and annuities to most transportation industry employees and their families.

UTU members are not required to purchase insurance from UTUIA. It is their right to avail themselves of the products in UTUIA's portfolio, and the outstanding service provided to its policyholders.

### **THE MARKETING AND SALES DEPARTMENT**

UTUIA's sales arm, the Marketing and Sales Department, is responsible for keeping UTU members and others apprised of insurance and investment products available to them. The sales force consists of field supervisors and local insurance representatives who work with UTUIA personnel to help members and their families achieve financial goals and meet insurance needs.

### **DISCIPLINE INCOME PROTECTION PROGRAM**

The UTU's Discipline Income Protection Program provides payment for a specific amount and period of time to an employee suspended, dismissed or removed from service by the carrier for alleged violation of rules or operating procedures, provided that such violations do not come within the list of exceptions not covered by the program.

Those who participate choose the level of benefits they want, from \$6 to \$200 per day, all at low monthly assessments. The term of benefits, from 200 to 365 days, depends on how long they have been enrolled in the program.

All UTU members in the U.S. and Canada may enroll as members on a voluntary basis. For more information write: Discipline Income Protection Program, UTU, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107.

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## **ABOUT THE RAILWAY INDUSTRY**

Between 1850 and 1950, railroads ruled the transportation industry. Railroads joined the populated East to the frontier West. They were the links between cities and towns, hauling virtually everything (and everybody) that was transported across North America.

Progress brought change. A national network of highways followed the invention of the automobile and truck. Airports sprang up as air transport was perfected. Waterways were constructed and barge traffic increased. The government taxed railroads to support and encourage its competitors, so the railroads' share of transport business dwindled. Some railroads reacted quickly to changes and they prospered. Many did not. By the early 1950s, the industry had reached a crisis.

Changes came rapidly. Steam locomotives were phased out in favor of diesel power. Management brought in new people with new ideas to improve operations. Railroads pioneered the use of electronic data processing and computer systems to trace shipments and rail cars. They developed electric signals, switches and improved rail-car braking devices.

In the late 1950s, railroads decided to concentrate on long-haul freight. Despite heated opposition, they steadily abandoned passenger trains until the government, in 1970, finally stepped in to create the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, more commonly known as Amtrak, to maintain a basic rail passenger system for the nation.

The Surface Transportation Board, the government agency that regulate the industry, has classified railroads according to the total amount of business they do. Class I railroads are the major carriers, with annual operating revenues of \$267 million or more. While Class I carriers comprise only 1% of the nation's freight railroads, they account for about nine of every 10 tons of rail freight hauled, 92% of revenues, 88% of employees, and about 68% of total rail mileage.

There are now seven Class I railroads in the U.S., down from about 60 in the mid-1970s and 200 at the industry's peak. (A list of Class I railroads is printed in the back of this book.) They operated more than 173,000 miles of lines in 2002, compared with 191,620 ten years ago.

Mergers have played a major role in reducing the number of railroads and miles operated. The 1980 passage of the Staggers Rail Act further changed the industry. Deregulation of railroads has enabled carriers to abandon rail lines more easily, raise or lower rates quickly, merge operations more easily, and set long-term freight contract rates for specified numbers of carloads. The act also allows carriers to become total trans-

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portation companies through the acquisition of competing truck and barge lines. Railroads also have profited immensely from the growth of piggyback and container traffic in which highway trailers and freight containers are loaded aboard special rail cars. This is now the second highest source of railroad traffic, after coal.

### **RAILWAY EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK**

The railroad industry will remain a prime employer in the future, although its rate of employment growth will not be dramatic. Railroad employment has declined for a number of reasons: improved employee productivity, reduced traffic levels and increased competitive pressure in the marketplace. Excluding Amtrak, employment has declined almost 20% over the past decade, while earnings per employee have increased by more than 35%. Class I railroads still offer the best opportunities for employment and advancement, although short-line railroads are currently the fastest-growing segment of the industry. Technological change has brought a shifting employment pattern. Entire crafts disappeared along with the steam locomotive, and others declined in numbers with the advent of computer systems. The need for manual labor has diminished while an increasing number of jobs require technical and managerial skills.

Applicants for railroad employment should be high school graduates or equivalent, have good hearing and eyesight, color vision, hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity. Mechanical and electrical aptitude is also a plus. Physical stamina is required for many rail jobs, and most employers require a physical examination, including drug and alcohol screening, of job applicants.

Railroad business closely follows the national economy. Railroads commonly furlough and recall workers as needed to meet the requirements of business highs and lows. Employees usually cannot be sure of steady employment until they have attained enough seniority.

Using fewer employees and far less fuel, trains remain the most energy-efficient method of transporting large amounts of freight over long distances. The peak business year was 2002 (the latest figures available), when Class I railroads carried 1,534 billion ton-miles of traffic (a ton-mile is one ton of cargo hauled one mile), which was more than 2% above the previous record year of 2001. The transport of goods in containers and trailers has become the railroads' largest commodity, and that segment of the market continues to grow. Renewed emphasis on the use of low-sulfur coal for electrical generation also has helped railroads since they are the prime transporters of coal for both domestic and export markets.

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## **OPERATING CRAFTS AND WORKING CONDITIONS**

Working conditions on railroads vary according to job or craft. Some employees work exclusively inside locomotives, while others work on and off trains, inside and outside. Some employees travel hundreds of miles to work; others work in one location.

Since trains run at all hours of the day and night, many operating employees do not have five-day work weeks. They can be called for duty at any hour, on short notice. Only those who have accumulated seniority have much say about which jobs they prefer and the hours they will work. New employees may be on call 24 hours a day.

Many operating railroaders must work irregular hours in adverse weather. They are subject to discipline if they try to avoid distasteful jobs or bad weather or make themselves unavailable when on call. It is not unusual to be away from home on weekends and holidays. Limited expenses are paid to operating employees when they are required to stay over at away-from-home terminals between runs.

After a training period, new employees in the operating crafts are trained on the job, working with more experienced employees. Newly trained workers are placed on the "extra board," a list of employees available for work when regular employees are absent. Seniority determines a worker's position on the extra board. Once an employee accumulates enough seniority, which can take years, the employee may bid for a regular assignment. With additional seniority, an employee may transfer from one type of service to another. Seniority always controls advancement and the opportunity to take tests for promotion. An employee must accumulate seniority in all crafts available so that he or she can exercise seniority to claim a better position or assignment.

The computation of pay once was a complicated procedure in the rail industry, but the UTU has been working to change that. Now, most railroad workers are paid what are called "trip rates," which is a set rate of pay for a specific job.

The eight-hour day and 40-hour work week, however, are standard for base pay in yard service and many non-operating railroad occupations, with time-and-a-half pay for any time worked over eight hours in a day or 40 hours in a week.

Safety is the most important consideration for anyone thinking about railroad employment. The railroader faces greater risk of personal injury or death than most other workers. The operating crafts are no-nonsense jobs requiring extreme care and alertness to prevent accidents

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and injury. Railroad crews are entrusted with millions of dollars worth of equipment, freight, and sometimes hazardous materials. They are responsible for the safety of passengers, other railroad employees, and thousands of citizens living and working near tracks and facilities.

Most railroaders are career people who spend their working lives learning new technology and methods for improving their job performance. These employees deserve good pay and benefits. In 2002, the average annual wage of train and engine service employees was more than \$59,000. Railroaders paved the way for most of the fringe benefits enjoyed by employees in other industries, including paid holidays, paid vacations, hospital and dental insurance plans.

Railroad employees are covered by the Railroad Retirement Act, which governs administration of retirement benefits financed through employer and employee taxes. Employees pay a tax equal to what most people pay into Social Security, plus a separate tax, called a Tier II tax, that is applied to future pension benefits. Employers also pay into the retirement fund, and finance unemployment and sickness benefits, as well.

Railroad employees also are protected under the Federal Employers' Liability Act, rather than by states' workers' compensation plans. The FELA gives rail employees injured on the job the opportunity to be fully compensated for their losses, including compensation for lost earnings, pain and suffering. Bus employees generally are covered by state workers' compensation programs.

## **LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND ALLIED CRAFTS**

### *DUTIES*

Engineers control starting, stopping and train speed. They constantly check meters and gauges that show speed, fuel, power and air pressure. In the yard and on the road, they watch for signals that indicate movements of other trains, obstacles on the track, equipment malfunctions and speed limits. They keep in radio contact with dispatchers and their co-workers on the train.

Before and after each tour of duty, engineers check the condition of locomotives and see that defects are reported to the engine foreman. On the road, they must know the makeup of their trains in order to safely regulate travel at different speeds, through curves and on grades. They must know the location of full and empty cars and prepare for slack action during starts and stops. Engineers also keep in touch with traffic control centers. Yard engineers work in switching yards, where they sort out cars and run switching engines to move cars around to make up

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trains. Firemen work with engineers, assisting in all functions, standing ready to take over the controls during emergencies and acting as safety lookouts on the left side of the locomotive, where the engineer cannot see. They are also prepared to cope with fire, explosions, short circuits and mechanical failures.

Employees known as hostlers service, move and deliver locomotives to crews at terminals, yards or layover points. Inside hostlers, limited to an enginehouse area, cannot take an engine beyond the confines of the service area. Outside hostlers are qualified to run locomotives beyond the enginehouse area and can use signal systems, crossovers and main-line tracks to deliver engines.

### *QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING*

Starting in the 1960s, industry changes reduced the number of firemen and increased demand for qualified engineers. Some railroads have adopted intensive training programs to shorten the time required to learn the engineer's craft. Most railroads promote engi-

neers from the ranks of conductors and brakemen. Since 1985, operating employees must accept promotion to engineer.

Engineer candidates must pass a series of tests to prove their ability to safely operate different types of locomotives and trains in all kinds of weather and operating conditions. Initially and periodically, they must prove their knowledge of hundreds of operating rules and facts necessary for the safe



movement of trains and crews over the road. Locomotive engineers also must pass government-mandated proficiency tests to earn a license similar to a driver's license. They also must know how to make minor emergency repairs to engines and how to safely shut down or isolate a defective locomotive and use remaining engines for power.

Firemen and hostlers are generally newly hired workers who must pass physical, aptitude and other tests before they are trained in classes and on equipment. After demonstrating basic knowledge of the job and work rules, they are teamed with more experienced workers to com-

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plete their training.

### *EARNINGS*

Earnings of engineers and firemen are determined by the job they perform. Most of these employees are paid a "trip rate" for the specific job they do, whether it is in a rail yard or over the road.

### *OUTLOOK*

Railroads will always need qualified engineers and improvements in railroad business will produce more jobs. The trend to shorter, faster and more frequent trains also means increasing demand for engineers. The outlook for hostlers and yard service employees should remain steady and should increase as railroad business improves. The outlook for firemen, however, is not good. This craft is being eliminated through attrition and promotion to engineer status.

## **CONDUCTORS**

### *DUTIES*

The conductor is in charge of the train and the crew. He or she is responsible for the movement of the train according to instructions from the yardmaster, the train dispatcher and others. The conductor also is responsible for the safety of passengers and cargo.

Conductors receive and communicate train orders to other crew members. During the run, they watch for danger and arrange for repair of mechanical breakdowns or for defective cars to be set out on the nearest siding. They also inspect the entire train before signaling the locomotive engineer to start moving. During emergencies, all other employees are subject to the conductor's instructions.

Freight conductors keep records of the contents, origin and destination of each car and see that cars are properly picked up and set out along the route. Passenger conductors collect tickets and cash fares and help passengers board and exit.

Yard conductors, often called yard foremen, direct the work of switching crews which make up and break up trains. In mechanized



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yards, they can also operate car retarders to control the movement and speed of cars. Yard conductors usually work at one location on regular daily shifts. Road conductors may travel great distances, staying at away-from-home terminals before making a return trip.

On some railroads, yard service and road service conductors have separate seniority lists and remain in one class of service throughout their careers. On other railroads, conductors can work yard assignments or in freight service according to their seniority and job preference.

### *QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING*

Most railroad conductors are high school graduates who have worked as brakemen long enough to have the seniority and skills necessary for promotion. They must pass a physical examination and have good eyesight, hearing and agility. They must also pass tests on signals, air brakes, timetables and operating rules. Passenger conductors must be able to handle passenger complaints in a tactful and pleasant manner.

### *EARNINGS*

Most freight and passenger conductors are paid based on the work they perform. Most are paid a "trip rate" for the job they do, whether it is in a rail yard or over the road.

Yard conductors, some of whom work a basic eight-hour day and five-day week, are paid time-and-a-half for work beyond these hours.

### *OUTLOOK*

In the immediate future, there will be a moderate number of openings for conductors, perhaps 3,500 per year. Jobs will develop primarily as senior employees retire, die or leave railroading. Future opportunities in this craft will be influenced by railroad economic growth and union/management agreements covering the employment of conductors.

## **BRAKEMEN AND ALLIED CRAFTS**

### *DUTIES*

As assistants to conductors, brakemen perform specific duties to assure the safe, efficient movement of trains over the road. Brakemen apply and release hand brakes on cars, inspect wheel bearings, inspect and couple air hoses, and help test air brake systems. They also check cars to make sure they are mechanically fit and assist conductors in the exacting job of switching cars along the line and placing and replacing cars for loading or unloading. Brakemen in particular are vigilant about close clearances, congested areas, vehicular traffic and people working

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on or near the tracks. They keep watch over the train on the road, especially around long curves, to check for smoke, sparks or other indications of sticking brakes, overheated wheel bearings, shifted loads and other equipment problems. In passenger service, brakemen are responsible for regulating air conditioning and heat, lighting, and other duties that assure passenger safety and comfort. They also make sure the train's computer controlled signaling devices and other automated equipment are functioning properly. They may also assist the conductor in collecting fares.

Brakemen in yard service and switchmen assist in making up and breaking up trains by operating switches to shift moving cars from one track to another and coupling and uncoupling brake lines. They are responsible for the safe, efficient movement of arriving and departing trains according to instructions from a dispatcher or yardmaster. In yards with automated switching equipment, much of their work may consist of coupling or uncoupling cars in blocks of two or more. Uncoupled cars are pushed over a hump or artificial hill by the yard engine and remotely switched and controlled, using a computerized system, from a control room.

Car retarder operators route and regulate the speed of freight cars in yards by controlling track switches and electronic car braking systems, generally from an elevated tower.

#### *QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING*

Most brakemen and switchmen are high school graduates who have passed thorough physical examinations. They must have good eyesight, hearing, physical agility, mechanical aptitude, good judgment, and the ability to get along well with others. Freight and yard brakemen may work from the extra board for some time before acquiring sufficient seniority to hold regular assignments and advance to become yard conductors and freight conductors.

#### *EARNINGS*

The pay of most road brakemen is determined by the work they perform. Most are paid a "trip rate" for the work they do, whether it is in a rail yard or over the road.



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#### *OUTLOOK*

Freight yard work has traditionally provided the greatest number of jobs for brakemen and switchmen, two of the largest occupational groups in the railroad industry. In recent years, however, job opportunities have declined and are expected to continue to decline with increasing use of new technologies for braking and switching cars. Future openings will result mainly from retirements, deaths and promotions. The growth that freight railroads have recently been experiencing, however, is producing some new job opportunities.

### **REMOTE CONTROL OPERATOR**

#### *DUTIES*

The remote control operator(s) is responsible for the safe movement of the engine and/or cars in carrying out their assigned duties and responsibilities. This includes the proper inspection of the locomotive prior to the start of their tour of duty and the inspection of cars and other equipment to assure that there are no defects that could result in unsafe working conditions, or damage to the track, the car or its contents.



In addition, the remote control operator(s) properly align switches to move cars and locomotives from one track to another and must couple and uncouple cars being handled, including all air hoses and brake lines as required by the operating rules. They must also apply brakes on cars set out on tracks to assure they do not move once placed on a track.

#### *QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING*

Remote control operators must pass the necessary training requirements to be qualified as a remote control operator and may be used to train others in the operation of remote control locomotives once qualified.

#### *EARNINGS*

Remote control operators are paid on the basis of an eight-hour day and 40-hour week, with time-and-one-half for overtime. In addition, remote control operators receive extra compensation per tour of duty at the hourly rate of the applicable position, in addition to all other earnings.

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## OUTLOOK

Remote control technology continues to evolve and improve and it is expected that the number of remote control operator positions will continue to increase accordingly. Qualified remote control operators are going to be needed and their numbers will no doubt increase as this technology becomes more widespread.

## YARDMASTERS

### DUTIES

Yardmasters are the traffic controllers of the yards and terminals in the railroad industry. Using computers and supervising switching equipment in the yard tower, they route trains and engines within the yard. The yardmaster reads switching orders and schedules to determine the time trains will arrive or depart, the sequence of movement and the routing of trains onto tracks. He or she receives and transmits switching orders to and from yard crews. Yardmasters also supervise clerical staffs in the yard offices.



### QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

Yardmasters are promoted yard brakemen and yard switchmen, and come from the ranks of administrative clerks. Employers generally require high school diplomas and a basic understanding of computers and record keeping. After training with established yardmasters and working odd hours, yardmaster candidates must demonstrate their proficiency before they can qualify for regularly available yardmaster positions.

### EARNINGS

Yardmasters generally work an eight-hour day and 40-hour work week, with time-and-a-half for overtime.

### OUTLOOK

Although the number of yardmasters has declined slightly in recent years with the consolidation of rail facilities, the employment outlook is somewhat positive. Qualified yardmasters are a necessary craft and their numbers will increase as railroad business improves.

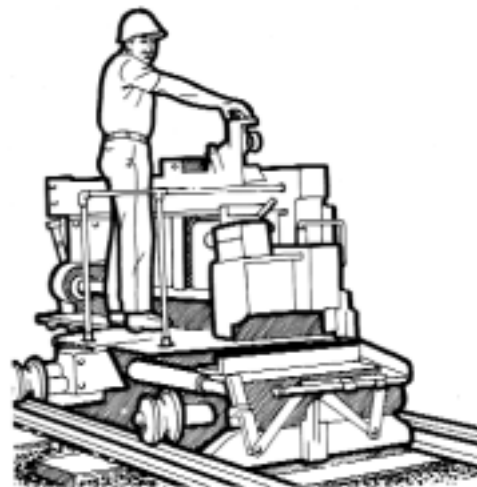
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## MAINTENANCE OF WAY EMPLOYEES

### DUTIES

The people who keep tracks, switches, bridges, yards and other rail facilities in good repair are maintenance of way employees. Their ranks include many occupations—from track repairers to operators of track-surfacing machines, rail-flaw detectors and track-moving machines. Maintenance-of-way crews operate equipment to prepare roadbeds, dig ditches, repair and replace ties, and weld, align and replace rails. They also replace and repair highway crossings, grind switches and track to compensate for wear, repair switch heaters, control vegetation along rights-of-way, repair track lubricators and replace



worn track spikes. Working conditions are often demanding and employees may be away from home for extended periods when large-scale track-repair projects are underway.

### QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

Most railroads require reasonable levels of education and physical fitness for maintenance of way employees. Most training is on the job under the direction of more experienced employees, with opportunities to learn to operate complex machinery and advance in earnings. The more skilled trades of carpentry, structural engineering, and mechanical and structural inspection require additional formal training.

### EARNINGS

Maintenance of way employees represented by the UTU are among the highest paid in the industry.

### OUTLOOK

As the railroad industry has come to realize that regular maintenance is cost-effective, the outlook for maintenance-of-way workers has improved. Short, fast trains and the trend to heavier rail cars means increased track maintenance and repair. More employees are hired for

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maintenance-of-way construction and repair in the warmer months of the year. The seasonal nature of the work is likely to continue, but experienced, skilled employees with good work records can almost be assured of continued employment year after year.

## **BUS DRIVERS AND MECHANICS**

### *DUTIES*

Bus driver duties vary, depending on whether they drive local buses in cities and suburbs, intercity buses, long-distance buses between states, charter buses on tours or school buses. When drivers report to terminals to get their assignments, they inspect their buses, check the fuel, oil, water and tires, and make sure safety equipment is on board. Expert, careful drivers are constantly alert to prevent accidents. They must be able to operate at safe speeds while meeting schedules and coping with adverse road and weather conditions. Driving a bus is usually not physically taxing but it requires concentration. The driver, solely responsible for the safety of passengers and bus, has a great deal of independence on the job.

Work schedules may be demanding. Intercity drivers may work nights and weekends. New drivers can be on call at all hours, ready to work on short notice. Driving schedules can range from six to ten hours a day, from three to six days a week. Charter, intercity and long-distance drivers may remain away from home for a night or more.

Bus mechanics are usually employed in company garages or repair shops. They use their knowledge of tools and equipment to keep buses roadworthy and to make major repairs such as rebuilding engines and transmissions, repairing air conditioners and other overhauls.

### *QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING*

Bus drivers must meet qualifications set by the U.S. Department of Transportation or a state agency. Most companies prefer experienced



drivers who are at least 25 years old and all require enough competence in English to communicate with passengers and complete reports. Other requirements are that the applicant be drug- and alcohol-free, have good hearing, at least 20/40 vision with or without glasses and normal use of arms and legs. Drivers must pass both comprehensive written examinations on motor vehicle regulations and driving tests in the types of buses they will operate. All states require drivers to have a commercial drivers' license. Many intercity bus companies give trainees two to eight weeks of classroom and "behind-the-wheel" driving instruction, as well as study of government rules and regulations, safe driving practices, ticket pricing, record keeping, and passenger service. After passing all examinations, new drivers make regularly scheduled trips with experienced drivers. They start out substituting for regular drivers or driving charters until they earn enough seniority to get a regular assignment. Some bus companies will train inexperienced people to be bus mechanics, although most prefer prior experience with automobile or truck repair.

### *EARNINGS*

Rates of pay vary with type of service. UTU interstate and charter bus operators work on a mileage or hourly basis, whichever pays more. Local mass transit operators earn an hourly rate, as do most school bus drivers, who work mostly part-time. UTU bus mechanics also are paid an hourly rate based upon seniority.

### *OUTLOOK*

Many commuters are deciding to take the bus rather than fight traffic and hunt for expensive downtown parking. Bus companies also are establishing better routes and offering more seats to encourage ridership. Both trends should lead to the need for more mass transit buses and drivers. Lower air fares may adversely affect the demand for interstate bus drivers. Large intercity companies furlough drivers during off-peak travel times and drivers may work for up to five years before they are fully employed. The number of school buses has increased about 4% a year for the past decade. A continued increase is expected as suburbs grow, districts consolidate schools, and special education students join regular classes. The demand for bus mechanics is expected to remain fairly constant in the near future. Competition for these positions, however, is stiff and mechanics with good work histories and specialized mechanical abilities stand the best chance of employment.

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## OTHER OCCUPATIONS REPRESENTED BY THE UTU

While the UTU primarily represents operating employees in the railroad and bus industries, the union has also expanded its representation to allied employees in the transportation industry. These other occupations include:

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|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Airline pilots</b>                | <b>Electricians</b>              |
| <b>Railroad signal operators</b>     | <b>Rail carmen/helpers</b>       |
| <b>Railroad signal maintainers</b>   | <b>Rail police officers</b>      |
| <b>Clerks</b>                        | <b>Boilermakers</b>              |
| <b>Machinists</b>                    | <b>Sheet metal workers</b>       |
| <b>Truck and van drivers</b>         | <b>Diesel electricians</b>       |
| <b>Dining stewards</b>               | <b>Diesel shop employees</b>     |
| <b>Bus dispatchers/schedulers</b>    | <b>Station masters</b>           |
| <b>Equipment maintainers</b>         | <b>Rail switch tenders</b>       |
| <b>Railroad signalmen</b>            | <b>Airport shuttle drivers</b>   |
| <b>Airport operations personnel</b>  | <b>Ticket and baggage agents</b> |
| <b>Airport maintenance personnel</b> | <b>Cleaners/washers</b>          |
| <b>Paratransit drivers</b>           | <b>Mechanical supervisors</b>    |



[www.utu.org](http://www.utu.org)

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## U.S. Class I Railroads

### **Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp.**

2650 Lou Menk Drive, 2nd Fl.  
Fort Worth, TX 76161-0057  
(817) 333-2000; [www.bnsf.com](http://www.bnsf.com)

### **Canadian National Railway**

*Illinois Central*  
*Grand Trunk Western*  
935 de La Gauchetière Street West  
Montreal, Quebec H3B 2M9  
(888) 888-5909; [www.cn.ca](http://www.cn.ca)

### **Canadian Pacific Railway**

*Soo Line Railroad Co.*  
Gulf Canada Square  
401-9th Ave. S.W.  
Calgary, Alberta T2P 4Z4  
(403) 319-7000; (888) 333-6370; [www.cpr.ca](http://www.cpr.ca)

### **CSX Transportation, Inc.**

500 Water Street  
Jacksonville, FL 32202  
(904) 359-3100; [www.csxt.com](http://www.csxt.com)

### **Kansas City Southern Lines**

427 W. 12th St.  
Kansas City, MO 64105  
(816) 983-1303; [www.kcsi.com](http://www.kcsi.com)

### **Norfolk Southern Railway**

Three Commercial Place  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
(757) 629-2600; [www.nscorp.com](http://www.nscorp.com)

### **Union Pacific Railroad**

1416 Dodge St.  
Omaha, NE 68179  
(402) 271-5000; (888) 870-8777; [www.uprr.com](http://www.uprr.com)

### **National Rail Passenger Corp. (Amtrak)**

60 Massachusetts Ave..  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 906-3000; [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)