

CIRCULAR LETTER NO. 15

December 26, 2006

TO ALL LOCAL CHAIRPERSONS AND LOCAL CHAIRPERSONS (ELECT):

Dear Sirs and Brothers:

As an on-going process in the General Chairman's office, we send out Circular Letters as circumstances dictate in regard to issues that are of importance to all of our Membership. We are requesting that you read these documents at your Union Meetings for the Membership's benefit and also place them on bulletin boards for those Members who cannot attend the Union Meeting. Incorporated below are issues of importance for our Membership.

FRA Final Rule - Occupational Noise Exposure:

The Federal Railroad Administration published the Final Rule governing Occupational Noise Exposure for Railroad Operating Employees in the Federal Register on October 27, 2006. You may access the document at:
www.fra.dot.gov/downloads/counsel/nprm/Occupational_Noise_Rule.pdf.

Prior to February 9, 2009, the railroad carriers must establish a baseline audiogram for each operating craft employee. Hearing data already exists for those employees who are certified as locomotive engineers and remote control operators. Other employees will be required to undergo hearing testing to establish a baseline audiogram.

Privacy issues have previously been raised in connection with carrier impelled hearing testing. This issue was addressed in Circular Letter No. 12, dated November 3, 2006. The carrier was requesting that employees sign a universal medical release when availing themselves of the "free" hearing test offered by the carrier. Additional information will be provided when available.

ES **COLA Increase and Tax Changes:**

Effective January 1, 2007, basic daily rates of pay will be increased by \$.15 per hour, \$1.20 per day. Trip rates will be increased by a factor equivalent to the COLA increase, applied to non-frozen pay elements. Concurrently the employee contribution toward health care will increase by \$17.02 per month.

The increases in trip rates will not be made effective until after the December payroll is closed. Employees should not expect to see the increase until after January 11, 2007, when the timekeeping department will update all earnings subsequent to January 1st.

January 1, 2007, the Tier II tax rates will decrease for the employee from 4.4% to 3.9%. In 2004, the tax rate for employees was 4.9%. The decrease is possible because of the performance of the National Railroad Retirement Trust, which invests the assets of the Railroad Retirement Fund.

ES **RCL Equipment Issue:**

Recently an incident occurred which involved a CATTRON equipped locomotive. The locomotive did not respond to commands from the remote control operator, who stopped the locomotive by causing a "com loss" which closed the throttle and applied the brakes. The equipment was sent to the CATTRON lab, where it was determined that "electronic noise" was interfering with the signal.

If employees in your area are utilizing the CATTRON equipment, advise your members that this type of incident has occurred and could possibly occur again. If incidents have occurred in the past which were attributed to other causes, but which had similar characteristics, please advise this office of the details of those incidents. If future incidents occur, request from the carrier a full investigation to determine the integrity of the decoder board hardware and data port signals.

Trusting this information will aid you in keeping our Membership informed of issues confronting us and with best personal wishes, I remain

Fraternally yours,



Michael J. Reedy
General Chairman, G.C.A.

MJR:jg

cc: Paul Thompson, President - UTU
Rick Marceau, Assistant President - UTU
Dan Johnson, III - General Secretary/Treasurer - UTU
Joe Szabo, Director Illinois State Legislative Board - UTU
Pat Hendricks, Director Iowa State Legislative Board - UTU
Phil Qualy, Director Minnesota State Legislative Board - UTU
Ray Lineweber, Director Nebraska State Legislative Board - UTU
Tim Deneen, Director Wisconsin State Legislative Board - UTU