

# Program Letter

United States  
Railroad Retirement Board



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Office of Programs  
Quality Reporting Service Center

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Date: July 23, 2013

TO: **Unemployment and Sickness Contact Officials**

SUBJECT: **New Benefit Year Information**

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this program letter is to inform you of:

- a new benefit year beginning date and qualifications;
  - an increase in the maximum daily benefit rate; and
  - a new dollar threshold for determining whether the earnings test applies.
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**New benefit  
year**

A new benefit year for railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits begins July 1, 2013 and ends June 30, 2014.

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**New benefit  
year  
qualifications**

To qualify for benefits in the new benefit year, an employee must have \$3,412.50 in creditable railroad earnings in calendar year 2012, counting no more than \$1,365.00 per month. If 2012 was an employee's first year of railroad work, he or she must also have railroad service in at least 5 months of 2012.

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## New Benefit Year Information, Continued

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### Waiting period

Benefits are payable for days of unemployment or sickness over 7 in an employee's first 14-day claim in the new benefit year. This satisfies a required one-week waiting period. The one-week waiting period applies to both the first claim for unemployment benefits and the first claim for sickness benefits in the benefit year. In order to satisfy the waiting period requirement, the first claim must contain more than 4 days of unemployment or sickness. Initial sickness claims must begin with 4 consecutive days of sickness. After the waiting period is satisfied, benefits are generally payable for the number of days of unemployment or sickness over 4 in each 14-day claim period.

The change in benefit years will **not** cause an interruption in the payment of **normal benefits** to claimants who continue to be unemployed or sick from one benefit year into the next benefit year. An employee who continues to be unemployed or sick from one benefit year into the next needs to satisfy only one waiting period; a second waiting period is not required when the employee's benefit claims continue into a new benefit year.

Employees who are currently receiving **extended unemployment benefits or extended sickness benefits** also do not have another waiting period at this time. A new waiting period is required only if the employee claims benefits in the new benefit year. The new benefit year begins after the end of the extension of the previous benefit year.

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### Maximum daily benefit rate

The maximum daily benefit rate for railroad unemployment and sickness benefits increases to \$68.00 for registration periods beginning after June 30, 2013. The maximum daily benefit rate is indexed to national wage levels.

The maximum benefit rate will yield \$680.00 for two full weeks of unemployment or sickness (10 days at \$68.00 per day). Some sickness benefits are subject to withholding of 7.65% for tier I retirement taxes, which can reduce biweekly payments to \$627.98 from \$680.00 for a full 2-week claim.

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### Earnings test rules

Under the RUIA's earnings test provision, unemployment benefits are not payable for any registration period in which the total amount of an employee's earnings or other remuneration from railroad and non-railroad work for days in the period exceeds the amount of the RUIA monthly compensation base. For claims in benefit year 2013 the earnings test amount is \$1,365.00.

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## New Benefit Year Information, Continued

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### Earnings test rules (continued)

Note: Although no benefits are payable for days denied because of the earnings test, the days remain days of unemployment for purposes of satisfying the waiting period requirement and determining periods of continuing unemployment. In addition, the earnings test **does not** apply to claims for sickness benefits.

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### Reporting earnings on prepayment notices

When you review our notices of unemployment claims filed by your employees, please check on whether the employee's earnings for days in the period exceeded the amount of the monthly compensation base. Earnings include pay employees did not earn because they failed to mark up, report for duty on time, or were otherwise not available for work.

Use the following table to determine how to report the amount of the employee's earnings.

<b>If you receive prepayment claim notices...</b>	<b>then report the amount of the employee's earnings by...</b>
on paper notice Form ID-4K	telephoning the RRB office shown on our notice.
electronically through RAILINC	indicating the employee's earnings in the NTE segment of your response, e.g. show "Gross Earnings Equal \$_____".
through the RRB's online Employer Reporting System(ERS)	enter the employee's earnings on the ERS ID-4K screen e.g. show "Gross Earnings Equal \$_____".

Note: Days claimed by an employee but denied because of the earnings test are indicated by a day code of **4** in the Claim Profile area on our notices of benefit claims (Forms ID-4E and ID-4K, and electronic RU1 and RU4 notices). A day code of **4** also indicates a claimed day of unemployment denied because of mileage or other work restrictions. A list of day codes and their corresponding meanings is included as attachment A with this letter. For information about our prepayment notices of claims, refer to Circular Letter No. UI-C-229.

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## **New Benefit Year Information, Continued**

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Claimants may file their applications for unemployment benefits, as well as their subsequent biweekly claims, online. Employees are encouraged to establish online accounts while still employed so the account is ready if they ever need to apply for these benefits or use other internet services.

**RRB Services Online** To file their applications -- or their biweekly claims -- online, claimants should access [RRB.gov](http://RRB.gov) and click on "Benefit Online Services" for directions on establishing an RRB Internet Services account. Once they establish their online accounts, they will be able to file their applications and claims for unemployment benefits, file sickness claims and conduct other business with the RRB, over the internet.

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**Contact** Please call Edward Roberts of Policy and Systems for any comments or questions about information in this program letter. His telephone number is (312) 751-4646.

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Claim Profile - Day Codes

Unemployment

- 0 Day not claimed
- 1 Claimed day of unemployment/available for work
- 2 Employed, day not claimed
- 3 Claimed day of unemployment, denied for miscellaneous reasons (Refer to Information Codes.)
- 4 Claimed day of unemployment, denied because of work restrictions and/or denied for the earnings test
- 5 Claimed day of unemployment, denied due to improper registration
- 6 Claimed day of unemployment, denied for miscellaneous reasons
- 7 Claimed day of unemployment, benefits reduced because of receipt of social insurance
- 8 Claimed day of unemployment, denied because of unavailability for work
- 9 Claimed day of unemployment, denied because of receipt of remuneration

Sickness

- 0 Day not claimed
- 1 Claimed day of sickness
- 2 Employed, day not claimed
- 3 Claimed day of sickness, denied for miscellaneous reasons (Refer to Information Codes.)
- 4 Claimed day of sickness, denied due to improper advance registration
- 5 Claimed day of sickness, denied due to improper delayed registration
- 6 Claimed day of sickness, denied for miscellaneous reasons
- 7 Claimed day of sickness, benefits reduced because of receipt of social insurance
- 8 Claimed day of sickness, denied due to ability to work
- 9 Claimed day of sickness, denied because of the receipt of remuneration