

Program Letter

United States Railroad Retirement Board Office of Programs



Quality Reporting Service Center

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TO: Certification Registration, Retirement and Unemployment Contact Officials

SUBJECT: Notice of Annual Rates

Please distribute this notice to all individuals within your organization who may need the information in connection with their work.

Creditable and Taxable Compensation

The 2004 railroad retirement tax rates and maximum compensation bases are as follows:

	<u>Tax Rate</u>	<u>Earnings Base</u>
Employee Tier I	6.20%	\$87,900
Medicare	1.45%	No Limit
Employer Tier I	6.20%	\$87,900
Medicare	1.45%	No Limit
Employee Tier II	4.90%*	\$65,100
Employer Tier II	13.10%*	\$65,100
Railroad Unemployment Insurance	Variable	\$1,130 per month

*Beginning in 2004, the Tier II tax rates are determined annually from a tax rate schedule based on an average account benefits ratio reflecting railroad retirement fund levels. Employer tax rates can range from 8.2 percent to 22.1 percent. Employee tax rates can range from 0 percent to 4.9 percent.

Experience Rating

In October 2003, each employer was sent a notice of their 2004 Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA) contribution rate. If you have not received your notice, please contact the Quality Reporting Service Center.

Retirement and Survivor Benefits

Exempt Amounts for Annual Earnings Test for Less Than Full Retirement Age Annuitants: In 2004, the annual exempt amount for less than full retirement age annuitants is \$11,640. The monthly exempt amount for the first year of retirement in 2004 is \$970.

Exempt Amounts for Annual Earnings Test for Full Retirement Age Annuitants: In 2004, the annual exempt amount for full retirement age annuitants is \$31,080. The monthly exempt amount for the first year of retirement in 2004 is \$2,590.

Cost-of-living Increase: Annuitants will receive a cost-of-living increase effective December 2003. Tier I will increase by 2.1% and Tier II will increase by 0.7%. This increase is before adjustment for other benefits.

Unemployment and Sickness Benefits

Maximum Daily Benefit Rate: Under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA), the maximum daily benefit rate is equal to 5 percent of the monthly RUIA compensation base, rounded down to the nearest multiple of \$1.00. For days of unemployment and sickness in registration periods beginning on and after July 1, 2004, the maximum daily rate is \$56.00. The maximum rate for registration periods beginning on or after July 1, 2005, is \$56.00.

Maximum Monthly Compensation Base: The monthly compensation base under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act for calendar year 2004 is \$1,130.

Qualifying Base Year Compensation: The amount of base year compensation required in 2004 to qualify for benefits in the benefit year beginning July 1, 2005, is \$2,825.00.

Compensation of \$2,825.00 is also the amount of creditable compensation required to end a voluntary leaving of work disqualification period in months in calendar year 2004. In addition, remuneration earned in calendar year 2004 from employment covered under the Act cannot be considered subsidiary remuneration if the employee's base year earnings are less than \$2,825.00.

Maximum Benefits: The monthly amount of base year 2004 compensation that can be counted in determining the maximum amount of normal benefits payable to an employee in the benefit year beginning July 1, 2005, is \$1,460.

Maximum Monthly Compensation Base and the Earnings Test: For unemployment registration periods beginning July 1, 2004 and later, no benefits are payable for which the total amount of an employee's earnings and other remuneration from railroad and non-railroad work for days in the period exceeds the monthly compensation amount of \$1,130.