

125.5 Establishment And Maintenance Of Files

125.5.1 Field Office Files

Each office is required to maintain files to provide for the timely handling of inquiries and proper development of retirement and survivor claims. While the particular filing system used may be subject to the approval of the network director, it must readily indicate:

- A. The present state of development of each active case; what forms, documents or other information has been previously submitted to Headquarters (such as check list forms) or is still to be obtained to complete field action in the case; and information indicating the return of any documents requested by the applicant; and
- B. Cases on which field office action has been taken. Records from completed cases may be purged and destroyed after 12 months from the date the field office completes its handling. Anticipated need for material in particular cases is justification for its retention.

All Forms G-671 (third party disclosure) are to be marked "RRA File Only or RUIA General Correspondence File Only" and sent to imaging when all action has been completed.

All file entries should be complete and clear enough to permit all qualified personnel to be readily able to understand what has transpired in the case.

125.5.2 Headquarters Claim Folders

Claim folders at Headquarters are maintained either by the social security (terminal digit) number of the railroad employee or by a serial claim number preceded by "A" or "D".

Generally speaking, if no contact (retirement pre-retirement, or notice of death) had been made prior to April 1, 1964, the claim folder is established by social security number. If a contact requiring the establishment of a claim folder was made prior to April 1, 1964, a serial claim number was assigned, a "D" prefix indicating that the death of the employee and subsequent adjudicative action called for the establishment of a file; an "A" prefix indicating a file has been established prior to the employee's death.

The control over the movement of claim folders is done through a mechanical system called the Automated Folder Control System (AFCS). The AFCS is used to obtain the current location "charge" of a claim folder. For a detailed description of the procedure and information about the Automated Folder Control System see the AFCS Folder Control Directory or Administrative Circular BSS-6 which is on Boardwalk under Bureau of Information Services.

125.5.3 Preservation of Facsimile Transmissions

All thermal paper facsimile (fax) transmissions that must be kept as a folder record should be copied on plain paper prior to filing.

Incoming copies on some fax machines are printed on "thermal paper," as opposed to plain paper. The images on thermal paper are extremely unstable and may begin to deteriorate in as few as 6 months. Such thermal papers are sensitive to heat and light, will react with chemicals found in ordinary office environments (including markers, cosmetics, and some types of plastic folders), and may contain impermanent dyes. As a result, the text is likely to fade and become illegible or the whole paper surface may darken, making the image indistinguishable. Thermal paper can be recognized by its smooth sheen and tendency to curl, making it difficult to handle.

Facsimile transmissions received via personal computer fax/modems and software are the same as those transmitted via fax machine.

Most current models of fax machines produce copies on plain paper by xerographic means, which produces a much more stable image than a copy made on thermal paper. Plain paper is easier than thermal paper to mark, copy and file.

125.10 Tracing Procedure

In the interest of processing claims as quickly as possible, a tracing schedule has been established to secure information in a timely manner. An itemized breakdown of tracing procedures for various forms used to certify payment is contained in Appendix E at the end of this article.

Use judgment in contacting an employer. If the number of tracers for employer information (i.e., Forms G-88P, G-88A.2, G-3EMP, etc.) appears to be large in relation to the employer, discuss the matter with the appropriate contact official. Stress the importance of completing such forms promptly to permit RRB payment within a reasonable time.

125.15 Transmittal Of Original Documents

If it is necessary to submit to Headquarters an original document that must be returned, insert the document in an envelope marked, "Document - To Be Returned." Mark the claim number on the document. Be careful not to staple through the document when transmitting it with other material.

125.20 Application Defects

An application defect or error is generated by conflicting, omitted or incorrect information on forms necessary for the mechanical payment of a retirement annuity. RASI, the mechanical system responsible for awarding retirement annuities, relies on

the information it is furnished from forms completed by a contact representative for a person filing for an annuity. Information is entered into RASI by data entry operators who have no knowledge of the provisions of the Railroad Retirement Act.

Information is coded directly from various retirement-related forms. Any defect in a form's completion causes RASI to reject the application and/or produce a referral explaining the defect. Referrals from RASI require an examiner's action to verify or correct the data in question; the correct or verified information must be reentered into RASI. The additional handling required to correct defects may cause award delays.

Records of application errors are maintained for each office. When an error is charged, the original is sent to the field office involved; copies are retained in Headquarters and sent to the appropriate regional office.

Any questions you have regarding a particular error should be directed to the program services section of the bureau of field services.

125.25 Mailing Documents or Media with Personal Identifying Information

The following have been developed for shipping documents or media containing sensitive or personally identifiable information (PII).

- Large quantities (more than 20 pages) medical evidence including medical evidence on CD's
 - Should be shipped in a secure manner such as registered mail or private courier with tracking capabilities, such as United Parcel Service (UPS).
- Smaller quantities (20 or fewer pages)
 - Should be shipped using security envelopes. It is not necessary to use registered mail or private courier with tracking capabilities.

If UPS is used to ship material to RRB headquarters, "MAILROOM" should be shown on the Name line in box item number 2 (DELIVERY TO) on the UPS Shipping Document. A telephone number for the recipient is not required. The RRB agency name is shown on the Company line while the RRB's headquarters address is shown on the Street Address, City/State, and Zip Code lines.

Note: UPS cannot be used to ship material to a post office box.

NOTE: For Medical evidence, terminally ill (TERI) and/or Compassionate Allowance (CAL) cases, disability freeze only applications, or other material which otherwise would have been sent directly to the Disability Benefits Division using Post Office Box 10695, send via UPS to the Disability Benefits Division using 844 N. Rush Street, Chicago, IL

60611. Indicate “DISABILITY” on the Name line in box 2 “DELIVERY TO” on the UPS Shipping Document. Again, a telephone number not is required.

If it is determined that UPS is the appropriate method of shipping, always consider using the least expensive shipping option that is appropriate for the type of document or electronic media being sent. Two options are available.

- Use the “**UPS 2nd Day Air**” service delivery option whenever possible.
- Use the “**UPS Next Day Air**” service delivery option when circumstances warrant overnight shipping.

The UPS 2nd Day Air and the UPS Next Day Air have separate yet similar shipping forms. The requested information shown in the box items listed below must be completed when preparing either form manually:

1. Shipment From
2. Delivery To (for 2nd Day Air) / Extremely Urgent Delivery To (for Next Day Air)
8. Method of Payment – check box labeled “Bill Shipper’s Account Number”
10. Shipper’s Signature

NOTE: Instructions and training has been provided to individuals who have access to UPS website (www.UPS.com) to prepare shipping documents on-line.

125.30 Incoming Mail Distribution

Refer to RCM 10.2 Appendix D for Headquarters Mail Distribution chart.

