



# UNITED TRANSPORTATION UNION

LOCAL 298

*"The Voice of Transportation Labor"*

Providing Exclusive Representation of Trainmen and Equal Representation of Engineers

March 2010

**Next Meeting: April 12, 2010 @ 9am RR INN**

### UTU OFFICERS

President	Rick Mitchener	260-897-2767
V. President	Mike Reel	260-908-3851
Secretary/Treasurer	Kevin DeCoursey	260-615-3819

### LEGISLATIVE

Legislative Rep.	Bo Babbitt	260-553-0012
Alt. L.R.	Kevin DeCoursey	260-615-3819

### LOCAL CHAIRMEN

L.C. Trainmen	Tom Porter	260-466-4557
L.C. Engineers	Jamie Modesitt	260-615-6308
VLC	Ron Lutz	260-241-5752
VLC	Rick Mitchener	260-897-2767
VLC	Ron Hollandsworth	260-415-1039
VLC Engineers	Doug Fyfe	260-223-0352
VLC Engineers	Kevin DeCoursey	260-615-3819

### TRUSTEES

Brian Cornell  
Max Teders

### SAFETY OFFICERS

Kevin DeCoursey	Chairman	260-615-3819
Ron Lutz	Vice Safety Chair.	260-241-5752
Bill Schamper	Secretary	260-235-0730

**CURRENT UTU DUES Trainmen \$97.95 Engineer \$97.95**

FELA Designated Legal Council This Month

## The Brennan Law Firm, PTC

1-800-816-7245

[www.fela-lawyer.com](http://www.fela-lawyer.com)

**NEED JOB INSURANCE?**

**United Transportation Union Insurance Association**

GREG HALE: 574-286-5902 [www.utuia.org](http://www.utuia.org)

**DEMOTED ENGINEERS—UPDATE YOUR BID CARDS!**

Please don't forget to update your EBS Bid Cards to reflect the most recent bids. As the need for Engineers grow more demoted Engineers will be promoted. Don't get caught off guard, update your bids! Bids close every Wednesday at 2200.

### **DUAL-SENIORITY CONDUCTORS BEING REQUIRED TO OPERATE A LOCOMOTIVE FOR CERTIFICATION-RIDE**

If you are asked to operate a locomotive while working as a Conductor because the RFE needs to obtain his annual certification ride with you; then please follow the below information to submit the proper claims.

1. **File a "QC" claim for the amount of money you would be due in certification pay for that tour of duty (\$15 ).** I don't see any specific contractual support for this, but as I understand it, the Carrier is paying the certification pay because of the operation of the locomotive.

2. Progress a claim for a separate day under code "97" for working in another craft as an engineer (which will almost certainly be declined); and put a note in the box for the 1<sup>st</sup> out conductor for the time the job was left without a conductor (which will also almost certainly be declined). We will then process the denied claims through LCAT.

## **COBRA subsidy extended through March 31**

Congress has extended through March 31 the eligibility period for the so-called COBRA subsidy program, and also liberalized eligibility standards. The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act [COBRA] gives workers and their families who lose their health benefits the right to choose to continue group health benefits provided by their group health plan for limited periods of time under certain circumstances such as voluntary or involuntary job loss, reduction in the hours worked, transition between jobs, death, divorce, and other life events. Qualified individuals may be required to pay the entire premium for coverage up to 102 percent of the cost to the plan. COBRA generally requires that group health plans sponsored by employers with 20 or more employees in the prior year offer employees and their families the opportunity for a temporary extension of health coverage [called continuation coverage] in certain instances where coverage under the plan would otherwise end. One of the provisions in new legislation just passed by Congress is an amendment to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) which extends the eligibility period for a 65 percent COBRA subsidy program from Feb. 28 to March 31. In addition to extending the eligibility period, the new legislation expands the definition of individuals eligible for the subsidy. If an employee had/has a COBRA qualifying event that is a reduction in hours anytime between Sept. 1, 2008, and March 31, 2010, and as a result they were/are no longer eligible for their health insurance benefits, but they either did not elect COBRA at that time, or COBRA was elected and subsequently dropped, and the employee experiences an involuntary termination of employment on or after March 2, 2010, the individual must be given a second opportunity to enroll in COBRA. These individuals would be eligible to elect COBRA at the subsidized rate.

Also, persons who are currently on COBRA as a result of having had a qualifying event that was a reduction in hours between Sept. 1, 2008, and March 2, 2010, and are involuntarily terminated on or after March 2, 2010, will also be eligible for the subsidy. In either case, the COBRA eligibility period (18, 29 or 36 months) will be considered as having started on the date of the initial reduction in hours. UnitedHealthcare will assure that the plans comply with these new requirements. Under ARRA, if an individual is an "Assistance Eligible Individual" (AEI), they may be eligible to temporarily reduce the amount of the premium payment required to purchase COBRA continuation coverage under their medical, dental and/or vision plan(s). In order to be an AEI, the employee must experience an Involuntary Termination of employment (dismissal, suspension or furlough) on or after Feb. 17, 2009, and before April 1, 2010. The other requirements that must be met to be an AEI still remain in place (i.e., they must not be eligible for any other group medical/dental/vision coverage or Medicare; must not have earnings for the taxable year in excess of \$145,000 [\$290,000 for joint filers]). If a person qualifies for the reduced COBRA premium rate, they would be responsible for payment of only 35 percent of the current COBRA monthly premium for a period of between twelve (12) and fifteen (15) months. **For more information on the COBRA subsidy extension, contact UnitedHealthcare at (800) 842-5252.**

March 5, 2010