

Program Letter

United States Railroad Retirement Board Office of Programs



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Date: December 5, 2016
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TO: Certification Registration, Retirement and Unemployment Contact Officials

SUBJECT: Notice of Annual Rates (2017)

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 2017 railroad retirement tax rates and maximum compensation bases are as follows:

	<u>Tax Rate</u>	<u>Earnings Base</u>
Employee Tier I	6.2%	\$127,200
Medicare	1.45%	No Limit
Employer Tier I	6.2%	\$127,200
Medicare	1.45%	No Limit
Employee Tier II	4.9%	\$94,500
Employer Tier II	13.1%	\$94,500
Railroad Unemployment Insurance	Variable	\$1,545
Railroad Unemployment Insurance Maximum	None	\$1,996

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.

Additional Medicare Tax: Beginning in 2013, employees will pay an additional 0.9 percent on earnings above \$200,000 (for those who file an individual return) or \$250,000 (for those who file a joint return). This additional HI tax rate is not reflected in the tax rates shown above. For additional information, contact the Internal Revenue Service.

Experience Rating

In October 2016, each employer was sent a notice of their 2017 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 2017, the annual exempt amount for less than full retirement age annuitants is \$16,920. The monthly exempt amount for the first year of retirement in 2017 is \$1,410.

Exempt Amounts for Annual Earnings Test for Full Retirement Age Annuitants: In 2017, the annual exempt amount for full retirement age annuitants is \$44,880. The monthly exempt amount for the first year of retirement in 2017 is \$3,740.

Cost-of-living: Annuitants will receive a cost-of-living increase effective January 2017. Tier I will increase 0.3%, and Tier II will increase by 0.1%. This increase is before any 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, 2017, the maximum daily rate is \$72.00. The maximum rate for registration periods beginning on or after July 1, 2018, is \$77.00.

Monthly Compensation Base: The monthly compensation base under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act for calendar year 2017 is \$1,545.

Qualifying Base Year Compensation: The amount of base year compensation required in 2017 to qualify for benefits in the benefit year beginning July 1, 2018, is \$3,862.50.

Compensation of \$3,862.50 is also the amount of creditable compensation required to end a voluntary leaving of work disqualification period in months in calendar year 2017. In addition, remuneration earned in calendar year 2017 from employment covered under the Act cannot be considered subsidiary remuneration if the employee's base year earnings are less than \$3,862.50.

Maximum Benefits: The monthly amount of base year 2017 compensation that can be counted in determining the maximum amount of normal benefits payable to an employee in the benefit year beginning July 1, 2018, is \$1,996.

Maximum Monthly Compensation Base and the Earnings Test: For unemployment registration periods beginning July 1, 2017 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 \$1,455.