Program Letter

Quality Reporting Service Center

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Letter No. 2019-03

Date: September 30, 2019
[Revised April 30, 2022]

TO: **Certification Contact Officials**

SUBJECT: **Electronic Version of Form BA-9 Available on the Employer Reporting System (ERSNet)**

Please share this information with the appropriate members of your staff who file service and compensation reporting forms for employees of your organization.

We have updated the services available on the Employer Reporting System (ERSNet) to now include Form BA-9, *Report of Separation Allowance or Severance Pay*. Effective April 30, 2022, all employers can sign up to use the Internet version of the BA-9 in order to securely, conveniently, and efficiently transmit separation allowance or severance pay information.

This new addition joins the twenty (20) employer forms and notices currently available in the ERSNet system. For a full list of forms, please refer to Section F of the attached BA-12 form.

BA-9 Background

Form BA-9 is used by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) to establish a disqualification period for unemployment and sickness benefits and to calculate and Separation Allowance Lump-Sum benefit due at retirement. In order for employees to be eligible for this benefit, the RRB must collect and maintain records of separation allowances and severance payments which were subject to Tier II taxation. Information on Form BA-9 may also be used to make deemed service month determinations.

General background information about Form BA-8 and its use can be found in Part V, Chapter 6, of both the Rail Employer and the Labor Employer Reporting Instructions.

Detailed instructions on how to use the system are covered in Part VIII of both the Rail Employer and the Labor Employer Reporting Instructions.

Rail Employer Reporting Instructions
https://www.rrb.gov/RERI_Chapter_3e_Form_BA-9_Report_of_Separation_Allowance_or_Severance_Pay

Labor Employer Reporting Instructions:
https://www.rrb.gov/LERI_Chapter_3e_Form_BA-9_Report_of_Separation_Allowance_or_Severance_Pay

Access Levels on the ERSNet Site

Access to ERSNet is role-based, which means that each user's access is tailored to the role or work they do at their company. Access levels are assigned by the company, allowing employers to retain control over the forms their employees can view and submit. If you are not enrolled and want to begin filing your reports on ERSNet follow the instructions below. An *Explanation of Access Levels* is enclosed.

Applying for Access

To apply for access do the following:

- Read the attached "*Security Guidelines*," explaining your responsibilities as a user of ERSNet. They are also available in Part 8 of both the Rail Employer and the Labor Employer Reporting Instructions.

  Rail Employer Reporting Instructions:
  https://rrb.gov/RERI_Chapter_8_Security_Guidelines

  Labor Employer Reporting Instructions:
  https://rrb.gov/LERI_Chapter_8_Security_Guidelines

- File the attached Form BA-12, *Application for Employer Reporting Internet Access*. Complete Sections A, B, C, and D then have the designated employee sign Item 5 in Section B and return the form to you. The certification in Section E must be completed by an official of the company who has authority to sign official RRB forms. If you have signature authority, sign the certification. Otherwise, the company president and those persons designated on Form G-117A, *Designation of Contact Official*, are assumed to have signature authority. For additional copies of Form BA-12 or information on how to complete it, go directly to https://rrb.gov/Employer/Forms/BA-12 or contact the Quality Reporting Service Center at the telephone number or email address shown above. All employer forms can be accessed on the RRB website at RRB.gov.

Within three to five days of receipt of an acceptable application, we will mail your user ID and password along with instructions for accessing the site. To deter fraudulent use of ERSNet, the Form BA-12 cannot be completed or filed on our website; original signatures (no reproductions) are needed and it must be transmitted by U.S. or express mail carrier. *For security reasons, facsimiles are not acceptable*.

Attachments
   Security Guidelines
   Explanation of Access Levels
   Form BA-12

Security Guidelines

Introduction
The site, https://secure.rrb.gov/ERSNet/login.aspx, is an official United States Government site intended for use by employers covered under the Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts in filing service and compensation reports with the Railroad Retirement Board and related activities. The site is referred to as the Employer Reporting System (ERSNet). The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) is taking all reasonable measures to ensure the security of the information sent and received via the ERSNet site.

Transmission Security
RRB.gov/ERSNet utilizes a secure transmission protocol (Secure Sockets Layer – SSL) to provide encryption protection for the communication between your computer and the server that RRB uses for the Employer Reporting Internet site. You will note that the address to the site begins "https" rather than "http". This indicates you are connecting to a secure site using Secure Sockets Layer.

Authentication of User
The RRB uses a written application form to ensure that only authorized users have access to the system. The application is signed by an authorized representative of the employer and reviewed by the RRB. Once authorized, future authentication is controlled by a logon and password. A logon, if used to file forms, has the same status as a signature on a paper document.

Password Security
It is the responsibility of each individual to keep secure the password supplied for the purpose of accessing the RRB employer site. In applying for access, you agree not to share your password and to log onto the system only as yourself. All individuals requiring access to the system should apply for their own access. Users are responsible for all use of their password accounts. The system will prompt you to change your password every 60 days. If you do not access the system that often, you will be prompted to change your password upon accessing the system but in no case will passwords remain active longer than 200 days.

Secure Your PC
It is the responsibility of each individual to secure their personal computers. When you step away from your computer, it is important to lock or turn it off so that unauthorized persons cannot use your computer to masquerade as you and gain illegal access.

Password Lockout
If you type your password incorrectly more than three times, you will be temporarily locked out of the ERSNet system. If you are locked out or suspect that your password may have been compromised, contact the password administrator (312) 751-4992.

Password Termination
When an employee who has access to this system, leaves your company, notify the RRB to terminate their access by completing Form BA-12, Application for Employer Reporting Internet Access. Forms should either be mailed to the address listed under Section E or faxed to (312) 751-7123. If you suspect an employee is, or may become, a security problem, immediately call the password administrator at (312) 751-4992. The RRB has the capability to lock out users on a temporary or permanent basis.

Security Guidelines

Session Timeout
For security reasons, a session will not remain open indefinitely. Twenty minutes of inactivity will result in an open session being deleted. Any data entered to a screen but not "updated" or "approved" depending on the options for that screen, will be lost when a session is deleted.

Privacy and Law Enforcement Investigations
The RRB is committed to protecting privacy. Any personal information you provide as part of the application process will be used only for the purposes described. Your logon and password control confidentiality of employer data by making available only information you are authorized to receive. System administrators will not read files unless absolutely necessary in the course of their duties and will treat the contents of those files as private information at all times.

The ERSNet system maintains statistical information concerning network traffic flow and volume including date, time, Internet protocol, type of browser and operating system. We do not collect personal information about you *just because you visit the site*. An attempt to identify individual users will be made if, and only if, illegal behavior is suspected.

For site security purposes, we have software that can identify users. If illegal behavior is suspected, this software could be used to:
1. trace the source of an attack designed to disrupt the site,
2. trace the source of an unauthorized attempt to modify information stored on this system, or
3. prove whether fraud has occurred in connection with a law enforcement investigation.

Use of this system constitutes consent to such tracing and auditing.

Unauthorized or Fraudulent Use
Any person who knowingly and willingly:

1. makes any representation that is false
   a. to obtain information from RRB records and/or,
   b. intended to deceive the RRB as to the true identity of an individual; or

2. obtains unauthorized access and/or modifies information on this site, could be punished by a fine or imprisonment, or both.

Cookies
This site uses temporary session "cookies" to give you a single, uninterrupted session when you are online. This allows you to move from one secure section to another without having to re-enter your logon and password. We do not use persistent "cookies" which are permanent files placed on a visitor's site to allow a website to monitor a visitor's use of the site. To the extent we use any cookies; they expire and are immediately deleted no later than the closing of the Web browser.

Explanation of Access Levels

Access is to Specific Forms
When the RRB was developing requirements for the Internet system, some employers required that the work of a department remain private within that department. As a result, we developed a "roles-based access" which provides access on an individual form basis. An employee's access is expected to be specific to their role, or work, at their company. If a form is used only by one department, access can be limited to employees in that department.

Two-Step Update and Approval Process
Again, when developing requirements, some employers required that a manager review and certify service and compensation reports completed by their staff. Others indicated that the person authorized to complete the report was also authorized to certify and file the report without additional review. No employer required a review of forms other than BA-3, BA-4, and BA-11 as these are the only forms which change the RRB record of an employee's service and compensation.

The RRB access system was designed to account for all of these differences. A separate update function was developed for Form BA-4. If you wish to use a second person as a reviewer, assign update access to the staff that prepare the BA-4's and assign approve access to the staff that review and certify BA-4's to the RRB. If you do not wish to use a second person as a reviewer, do not assign update access. Rather assign approve access to the staff that prepare and certify the BA-4's.

Update Access
This access is used only with forms that change the RRB's record of service and compensation, as explained above. Update access allows a person to complete or update a Form BA-4, but not to submit the form to the RRB. The form is updated to the system where it will await approval. The form appears in the "outstanding items" list with a status of "awaiting approval." Only a person with approve access can submit or certify the form to the RRB. While the form is pending approval, it can be modified by the original updater. Once the form has been approved, it is no longer available on the system and no further changes are possible.

Approve Access
Only a person with approve access can certify and submit forms to the RRB. For most forms, the person with approve access will also be the person who completes the form. In the case of a BA-4, the person with approve access may be approving a form completed by an updater, as explained above, or may prepare and certify their own BA-4's. A person with approve access can delete a form created by an updater. A person with approve access can also modify a form created by an updater; however, the form must be updated again before it is approved. This is a security measure so that all the updates can be recorded for the appropriate person.

Read-Only Access
This access is used with forms that have summary reports. Read access to Form BA-4 is access to the BA-4 summary report, not to pending Forms BA-4. Read access does not include access to pending work on the system whether initiated by the RRB or by the employer. There is no read access to Forms BA-6a or GL-129a as these forms do not include reports.

Attachment for PL 19-03

Application for Employer Reporting Internet Access

General Instructions – This form may be used by employers covered under the Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts to add, modify, or terminate employee access to the Railroad Retirement Board's (RRB) Employer Reporting System (ERSNet). You may request system access for one or more employees, and you may authorize different levels of access for each employee. You may also request that an individual employee file online reports on behalf of one or more subsidiary or affiliate employers. In each case, your employees must certify that they will adhere to the RRB's security guidelines, which include the use of an authoritative electronic signature. The *Security Guidelines* are under *Part VIII, Chapter 8* of the *Reporting Instructions* on the RRB's website.

- To <u>request new or modified</u> system access, complete the entire form.

- To <u>terminate</u> an employee's access, complete only Sections A, B(1-4), D1, and E.

Making representations on this form to gain unauthorized access to the RRB Employer Reporting System or using an authorized access for fraudulent purposes is a violation of federal law punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both.

We estimate this form takes an average of 10 to 20 minutes per response to complete, including the time needed for reviewing the instructions, getting the needed data, and reviewing the completed form. Federal agencies may not conduct or sponsor, and respondents are not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. If you wish, send comments regarding the accuracy of our estimate or any other aspect of this form, including suggestions for reducing the completion time, to: Associate Chief Information Officer for Policy and Compliance, Railroad Retirement Board, 844 N. Rush Street, Chicago, IL 60611-1275.

Section A	Employer Information

In this section, enter the BA number, name, and address of the employer whose reports will be accessed online.

Special Instructions to Request Access on Behalf of Multiple Employers – If you are requesting the **same level of access** for the employee listed in Section B on behalf of multiple employers, list all affected BA numbers in Item 1. If you are requesting **different levels of access** for this employee for different employers, file a separate application for each level of access.

1. **BA Number(s):**

2. **Name and Address of Employer** – *If you are requesting access on behalf of multiple employers, provide only the name and address of the employer serving as primary contact for this account.*

Section B	Employee Information

1. Name:

2. Title	3. Telephone Number ( )	4. Email Address

5. I have read the document *"Security Guidelines"* and agree to comply with these guidelines. I understand that my logon, if used to file forms, has the same status as my signature on a paper document. I also understand that providing false or fraudulent information through the RRB Employer Reporting System is a violation of federal law punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Attachment for PL 19-03

Section C	Group or Section Email Address to Receive Notices

Complete this section only if you prefer to designate a group or section email address as the default address for RRB work notices, rather than the email address listed in Section B above.

1. Default Email Address:

2. If you have more than one group or section email address, number each address and specify here which forms or group of forms are associated with each address.

Section D	Requested Action and Level of Access

1. Action *(check appropriate box)*   ☐ **Add New User**   ☐ **Modify Access**   ☐ **Terminate Access**

2. Explanation of the Levels of Access Used in Section F on the next page.

R	Reader	User can only view the forms. Restricts access to "read only."
U	Updater	User has access to complete or "update" a form that changes the RRB's record of service and compensation. User cannot submit the form to the RRB without authorization.
A	Approver	User has access to approve, update, certify and submit forms to the RRB. Level "**A**" access is appropriate for personnel who work independently and supervisory approval is not needed.
X	Terminate	User is prohibited from access to ERSNet or a particular form.

For additional information on levels of access, see *Part VIII, Chapter 2* of the *Reporting Instructions.*

Section E	Certification of Authority to Approve Access

The form must be signed by an official with signature authority to sign RRB forms for the employer(s) listed in Section A. Signatures of two individuals are not required if the employee listed in Section B has authority to sign RRB forms. The head of the company and those persons designated on Form G-117A, *Designation of Contact Official,* have signature authority. A contact official may assign signature authority to a designee, but the RRB will verify with the contact official any signatures other than those of a contact official.

1. Name *(Print)*	**2. Title**	**3. Telephone Number** ( )

4. I have signature authority to approve this request and authorize the RRB to grant access as indicated above. I understand that I am responsible for notifying the RRB if, in the future, this individual's access should be terminated.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Questions? Please contact the System Administrator at (312) 751-4961 or the Quality Reporting Service Center at (312) 751-4992.

*Mail this completed application to***:   Quality Reporting Service Center**
Railroad Retirement Board
844 N. Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611-1275

For RRB Use: Access _____   Reviewed by: _____

Continued on Next Page

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Section F	Forms and Levels of Access				
Check one box for each form. **Note**: Employee's level of access **will apply for all employers** listed in Section A.1.					
Form BA-3, *Annual Report of Creditable Compensation*	☐ R	☐ U	☐ A	☐ X	
Form BA-4, *Report of Creditable Compensation Adjustments*	☐ R	☐ U	☐ A	☐ X	
Form BA-6a, *Form BA-6 Address Report*			☐ A	☐ X	
Form BA-9, *Report of Separation Allowance or Severance Pay*	☐ R	☐ U	☐ A	☐ X	
Form BA-11, *Report of Gross Earnings*	☐ R	☐ U	☐ A	☐ X	
Form G-73a.1, *Notice of Death of Railroad Retirement Annuitant*	☐ R			☐ X	
Form G-88A.1, *Request for Verification of Last Date Carried on Payroll*	☐ R	☐ U	☐ A	☐ X	
Form G-88A.2, *Notice of Retirement and Request for Service Needed for Eligibility*	☐ R	☐ U	☐ A	☐ X	
Form G-88P, *Employer's Supplemental Pension Report*	☐ R	☐ U	☐ A	☐ X	
Form GL-129a, *Record of Employer Determination on Employee Protest of Service and Compensation*			☐ A	☐ X	
Form ID-3s, *Request for Lien Information; Report of Settlement*			☐ A	☐ X	
Form ID-3u, *Request for Section 2(f) Information*			☐ A	☐ X	
Form ID-4E, *Notice of RUIA Claim Determinations*	☐ R		☐ A	☐ X	
Form ID-4K, *Prepayment Notice of Employees' Applications and Claims for Benefits under RUIA*	☐ R		☐ A	☐ X	
Form ID-6, *Report of Tier I Tax Transactions*	☐ R			☐ X	
Form ID-6Y, *Annual Summary of Tier I Tax Transactions*	☐ R			☐ X	
Form ID-30b, *Notice of Lien*	☐ R			☐ X	
Form ID-40Q, *Quarterly Notice to Employers – Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act*	☐ R			☐ X	
Form ID-40R/S, *Annual Notice to Employers – Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act and Annual Proclamation*	☐ R			☐ X	
Form RL-5a, *Notice to Employer of Annuity Award*	☐ R			☐ X	
Form SI-5F (SUP), *Status Report – Personal Injury Claims*	☐ R		☐ A	☐ X	