



RRB News

U.S. Railroad Retirement Board

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No. 09-2

For Immediate Release
February 2009

New Economic Legislation Affects Railroad Retirement Annuitants and Railroad Workers

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, recently signed into law by President Obama, contains a number of provisions that affect railroad retirement annuitants and railroad workers. This Act provides for a one-time \$250 payment to most individuals who receive railroad retirement benefits, and also provides up to 13 additional weeks of unemployment benefits for certain railroad workers who exhaust their rights to the benefits normally provided under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act.

One-time payment to beneficiaries.—A one-time economic recovery payment of \$250 will be paid to adults (including disabled adult children) who receive railroad retirement, social security, Supplemental Security Income or veterans disability benefits.

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB), the Social Security Administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs will be responsible for certifying and paying individuals under their respective programs. They will also coordinate activities to ensure that only one \$250 payment is issued to each eligible beneficiary.

Only individuals who were eligible for benefits under one of the four programs in November 2008, December 2008, or January 2009 will receive the special payment. All railroad retirement beneficiaries residing in the United States and U.S. territories, except children and Medicare-only beneficiaries, will receive this one-time payment. Payees receiving RRB payments based on a legal partition and/or garnishment are not eligible to receive this payment.

The RRB expects its payments to be issued in May 2009. The special payment will be a separate payment, which will not be included in the beneficiary's regular monthly benefit payment. It will be delivered in the same way a beneficiary currently receives his or her benefit payment (check or direct deposit).

Extended unemployment benefits.—The Act also provides an appropriation of \$20 million to be used for payment of additional extended unemployment benefits under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act. The new law provides the temporary extended benefits to employees receiving normal unemployment benefits for days between July 1, 2008, and June 30, 2009.

Railroad workers who previously were not eligible for extended unemployment benefits because they did not have 10 years of service may be eligible for benefits of up to 65 days within an extended period consisting of 7 consecutive 2-week registration periods.

Railroad workers who previously were eligible for extended unemployment benefits of up to 65 days may now be eligible for benefits of up to 130 days within an extended period consisting of 13 consecutive 2-week registration periods.

The latest date that an extended benefit period under these special provisions may begin is December 31, 2009, with payments stopping when the \$20 million has been expended.

The RRB is currently working on the details and program changes necessary to pay these special extended benefits due to the need for extensive programming changes. The agency will notify eligible individuals of their new rights to extended benefits and provide additional information about those benefits as soon as possible.

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