

Top 20

Railroad

Retirement

Questions

Answered

Most Asked Questions By:
The My Railroad Retirement
Community.

Table Of Contents

Introduction	4
1. When Can I Start Receiving Retirement Benefits From the RRB?	5
2. What Is My Full Retirement Age?	6
3. Can I Receive Credit for My Military Service?	7
4. How Are Railroad Retirement Benefits Calculated?	8
5. What Is the Estimated Maximum Monthly Benefit for a Retired Railroad Worker (And Spouse)?	9
6. What Are the Eligibility Requirements for Disability Benefits?	10
7. What are the eligibility requirements for receiving railroad retirement benefits?	11
What are the eligibility requirements for receiving railroad retirement benefits?	12
8. How Do I Apply for Railroad Retirement Benefits?	13
9. How Do I Update My Address with the RRB?	14

10. What is the first step I should take with the RRB; in the event of railroad employee or spouse death?	15
11. Can I Receive Benefits if I Work Part-Time After Retirement?	16
12. How are railroad retirement benefits taxed?	17
13. What happens to my benefits if I remarry?	18
14. What survivor benefits are available for my family?	19
What survivor benefits are available for my family?	20
Answers to question 14 continued	20
What survivor benefits are available for my family?	21
Answers to question 14 continued	21
15. How do I check the status of my application?	22
16. Can I receive benefits if I worked for multiple railroads?	23
17. How do I report a change in my income?	24
18. What is the process for appealing a unemployment or sickness benefits denied claim?	25
19. How do I find out if I'm eligible for Medicare?	26
Contact the RRB and Visit the RRB Website	26

20. Can I receive benefits if I work part-time after retirement?	27
Closing	28
Sources:	29

Introduction

Navigating the complex world of railroad retirement benefits can be challenging, but understanding the key information is essential for current and future retirees. This comprehensive guide covers the top 20 most frequently asked questions about railroad retirement, providing clear and concise answers to help you make informed decisions about your financial future.

From eligibility requirements and benefit calculations to tax implications and the appeals process, this guide aims to be a valuable reference for railroad employees and their families. Whether you're just starting to plan for retirement or are already receiving benefits, the information provided here will help you maximize your hard-earned retirement income and ensure a smooth transition into the next chapter of your life.

Visit MyRailroadRetirement.com





1. When Can I Start Receiving Retirement Benefits From the RRB?

There are two main types of retirement annuities, age and service annuities and disability annuities.

Employees with 30 or more years of creditable railroad service: They are eligible to start their annuity in the first full month they are age 60, without an age reduction. They can have their annuity start the first day of the month they are eligible for the annuity, with up to 6 months of retroactivity.

Employees with 10 to 29 years of creditable railroad service, or 5 to 9 years if at least 5 years were after 1995: They are eligible to start their annuity in the first full month they are age 62. If they retire at or after age 62, their annuity can begin the first day of the month they file their application. An annuity based on age cannot be paid until the employee stops railroad employment, files an application, and gives up any rights to return to work for a railroad employer. **Disability annuities can be paid to: Employees of any age if they are totally disabled:** The employee must have at least 10 years (120 months) of creditable railroad service to receive a disability annuity.

2. What Is My Full Retirement Age?

Full retirement age is the age at which you can receive the full amount of your Tier I and Tier II benefits.⁶ For those with less than 30 years of service, your full retirement age is the age you can receive unreduced Tier I and Tier II amounts.

The unreduced Tier I and Tier II amounts can be attained at age 66 and six months for employees and spouses born in 1957 or earlier. Then, the full retirement age increases for those born in 1958 to 1960. Until the 1958 to 1960 group of employees reached age 67. If the railroad employee was born in 1960 or later; then, the full retirement age is 67.

Railroad employee retiring with less than 30 years of service:

Birth Year	Full Retirement Age	Annuity Reduction (At Age 62)
1957	66 and 6 months	27.50%
1958	66 and 8 months	28.333%
1959	66 and 10 months	29.167%
1960 and later	67	30.00%

3. Can I Receive Credit for My Military Service?

You may be able to receive credit for your military service towards your RRB benefits in certain situations: You performed railroad service in the same or preceding calendar year as your active military service.

Your military service started during a war or a national emergency, or you served in the Armed Forces involuntarily. Any active duty service required after the end of the war or national emergency is creditable, except for voluntary service after September 14, 1978. You voluntarily served in the Armed Forces between June 15, 1948 and December 15, 1950 (when there was no declared national state of emergency), performed railroad service in the year you entered or the year before you entered military service, and returned to railroad service within a year after your military service ended, with no intervening non-railroad employment.

The military service is not being used by the Social Security Administration to determine your eligibility for Social Security benefits. If your military service is used by the RRB, it cannot also be used as quarters of coverage to qualify under Social Security. You should contact the RRB well in advance of retirement for information about required proof of military service.



4. How Are Railroad Retirement Benefits Calculated?

Railroad retirement benefits are made up of one or more components, called tiers.¹² They consist of two tiers, Tier I and Tier II.¹³ Each tier is calculated differently:

Tier 1

Tier I is calculated similarly to Social Security retirement benefits: It is based on your combined earnings under both the Railroad Retirement and Social Security systems.

It is reduced by any Social Security benefits you are receiving, to avoid duplication of benefits. This includes benefits based on your own earnings, as well as those based on another person's earnings.

You must notify the RRB if you receive any benefits directly from the Social Security Administration or if those benefits increase for any reason other than a cost-of-living adjustment. This helps to avoid an overpayment of your RRB annuity.

Tier 2

Tier II is similar to a private pension. It is calculated based on your years of railroad service and your earnings history.

If you have worked in both the railroad industry and in jobs covered by Social Security, your Tier I benefit will be reduced by the amount of the Social Security benefit you receive.

If you are receiving a spouse's benefit from Social Security based on your spouse's work history, your Tier I benefit will be reduced by that amount.

If you delay retirement past full retirement age, your Tier I benefit will increase by a certain percentage for each month you delay, up until age 70.

5. What Is the Estimated Maximum Monthly Benefit for a Retired Railroad Worker (And Spouse)?

Side by Side Comparison of maximum Railroad Retirement benefit (March 2024):

<u>Program and Benefit March 2024</u>	Maximum Railroad Retirement benefit	Maximum Social Security benefit
Retirement Benefits		
Employee alone	\$6,663	\$3,426
Employee and spouse	\$9,837	\$5,079
Survivor Benefits		
Family	\$10,395	\$6,863
Widow(er) alone at 65	\$6,200	\$3,662
Widow(er) alone at 60	\$5,286	\$2,803
Railroad Retirement Tier 2		
Average Monthly Compensation	\$8,993	N/A

Please note that the Railroad Retirement Tier 2 benefits are not directly comparable to Social Security benefits. Therefore, comparing your railroad retirement benefits to social security, and not including Tier 2 benefits Railroad Retirement is still out pacing Social Security in maximum retirement benefit.

More detailed information can be found at:

<https://myrailroadretirement.com/what-is-the-maximum-railroad-retirement-benefit-in-2024/>



6. What Are the Eligibility Requirements for Disability Benefits?

To be eligible for total disability benefits, you must: Be totally disabled from all regular work. And have at least 10 years (120 months) of creditable railroad service. Disability benefit is limited to the tier 1 portion only.

A disability annuity is not payable for any month in which you return to work for a railroad or union.

7. What are the eligibility requirements for receiving railroad retirement benefits?

To qualify for railroad retirement benefits, you generally need a minimum of 10 years of creditable service, meet age requirements, and maintain a current connection with the railroad industry. For disability and survivor benefits, additional specific criteria apply. More information:

1. Service Requirements

- **Minimum Service:** Generally, you need at least 10 years (120 months) of creditable railroad service to qualify for regular retirement benefits. If you have 5 years (60 months) of service after 1995, you may also qualify for tier I benefits.
- **Current Connection:** You must have a “current connection” with the railroad industry, which typically means you need to have worked for a railroad in at least 12 of the 30 consecutive months before your annuity begins.

2. Age Requirements

- **Retirement Age:** You can begin receiving benefits at age **62**, but if you retire before reaching your full retirement age, your benefits may be reduced. The full retirement age varies depending on your year of birth, gradually increasing from **65** to **67**.
- **Early Retirement Reductions:** If you retire early (before full retirement age), your tier I and tier II benefits will be reduced. The maximum reduction for retiring at age 62 is **30%**.

3. Disability Benefits

- If you are applying for disability benefits, you must have a current connection and meet specific service requirements. Generally, you need at least **10 years of service** or **5 years after 1995**.

What are the eligibility requirements for receiving railroad retirement benefits?

Answers to question 7 continued

4. Survivor Benefits

- For survivor benefits, the deceased employee must have had at least **10 years of service** or **5 years after 1995**, and there must be a current connection at the time of death.

5. Military Service

- Active duty military service may count towards your railroad retirement service under certain conditions, such as having railroad service before and after military service.

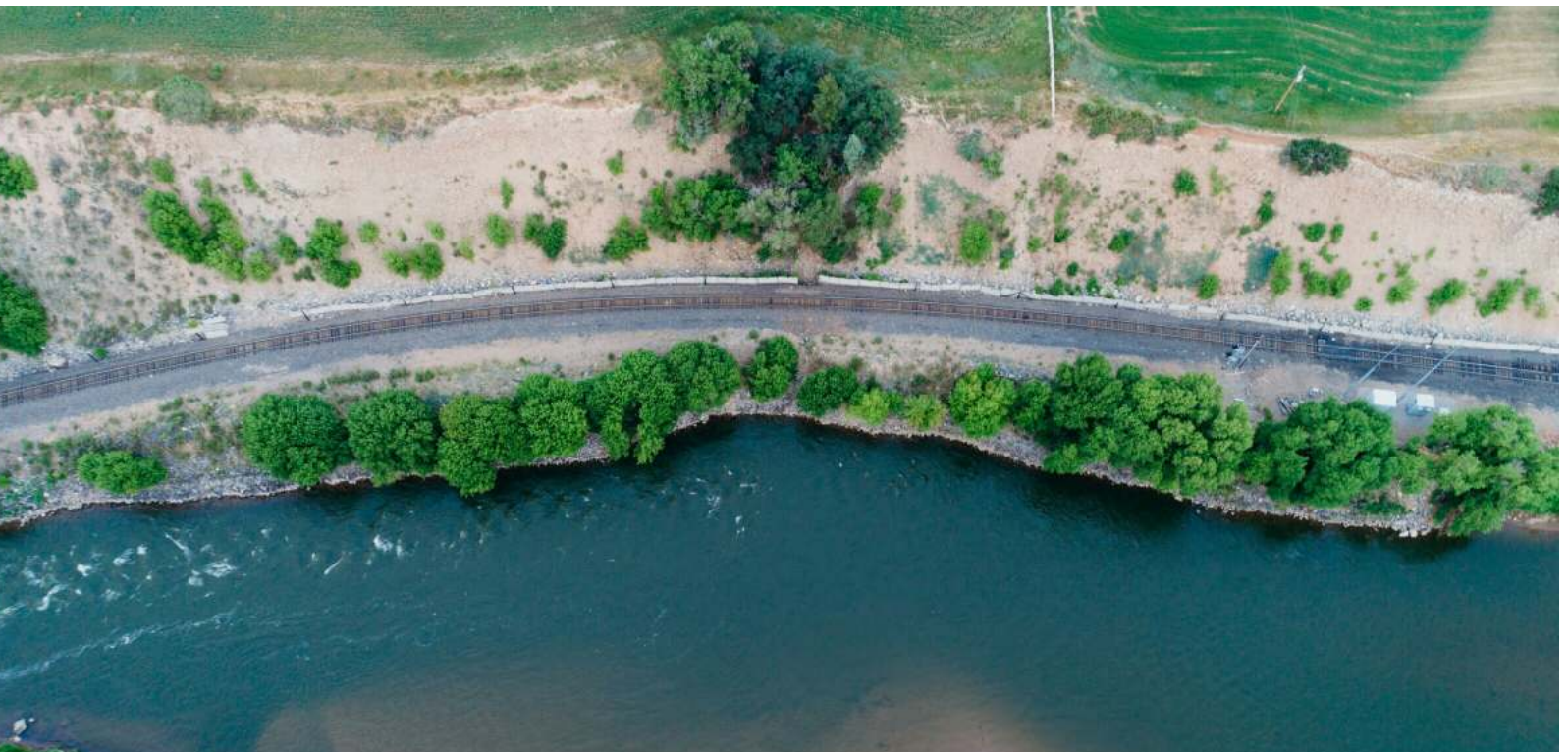
8. How Do I Apply for Railroad Retirement Benefits?

You can apply for RRB benefits up to 3 months before your annuity beginning date. You can apply in several ways:

In person: Contact an RRB field office to schedule an appointment. Over the phone: You can file an application over the phone or get information from an RRB representative.

By phone and mail: You may be able to start the application process over the phone and submit required documents through the mail.

Required documents: When applying, you must provide proof of age, marriage, and military service. You should also have your personal checking or savings account information ready so you can enroll in Direct Deposit.





9. How Do I Update My Address with the RRB?

You should notify both the RRB and your employer if your address changes. Updating your address can be completed by contacting an RRB office by phone, and mail. You can also update your address online through your myRRB account.

The following information is needed to update your address:

- Your railroad retirement claim number;
- Your name;
- Your old address;
- Your new address;
- When you will start receiving mail at the new address; and,
- If your spouse also receives a railroad retirement annuity, a statement that your change of address applies for both you and your spouse or if the change of address applies to you alone.

10. What is the first step I should take with the RRB; in the event of railroad employee or spouse death?

If an employee or spouse dies, promptly notify the RRB to avoid overpayment. It's illegal to cash or use annuity payments issued after the date of death, and they must be returned.

Direct deposit funds received for a deceased person must be returned as well. Survivor benefits may be available upon the employee's death.



11. Can I Receive Benefits if I Work Part-Time After Retirement?

You can receive benefits if you work part-time after retirement, but your benefits may be reduced or suspended depending on your earnings, your age, and who you are working for (railroad/union or non railroad employer).

Working for a railroad or rail union:

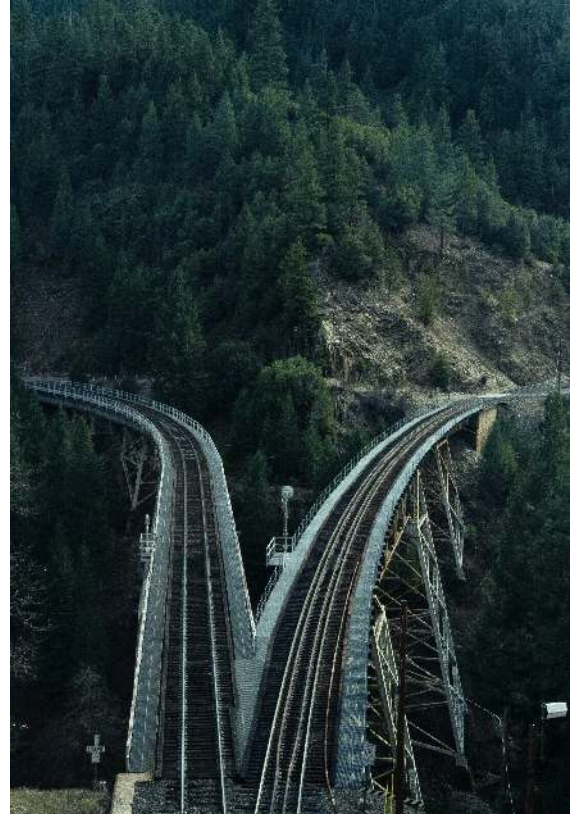
You will not receive an annuity for any month you work for a railroad or rail union, regardless of your age or earnings.

Working in retirement prior to your full retirement age:

Your Tier 1 and supplemental annuity amounts will be reduced by \$1 for every \$2 you earn over a certain limit.

Tier 2 payments may be subject to reduction as well by \$1 for each \$2 of earnings to a maximum reduction of 50%.

The Railroad Retirement Board requires that you notify the RRB if you return to work for a railroad or for your last pre-retirement non-railroad employer, regardless of your earnings or age.





12. How are railroad retirement benefits taxed?

Railroad retirement benefits are subject to federal income tax, with Tier I benefits treated like Social Security and Tier II benefits treated like private pensions. They are exempt from state income taxes, and beneficiaries have options for tax withholding. Proper documentation is provided annually by the RRB to assist in tax reporting. Documentation is usually mailed on January 31st each year.

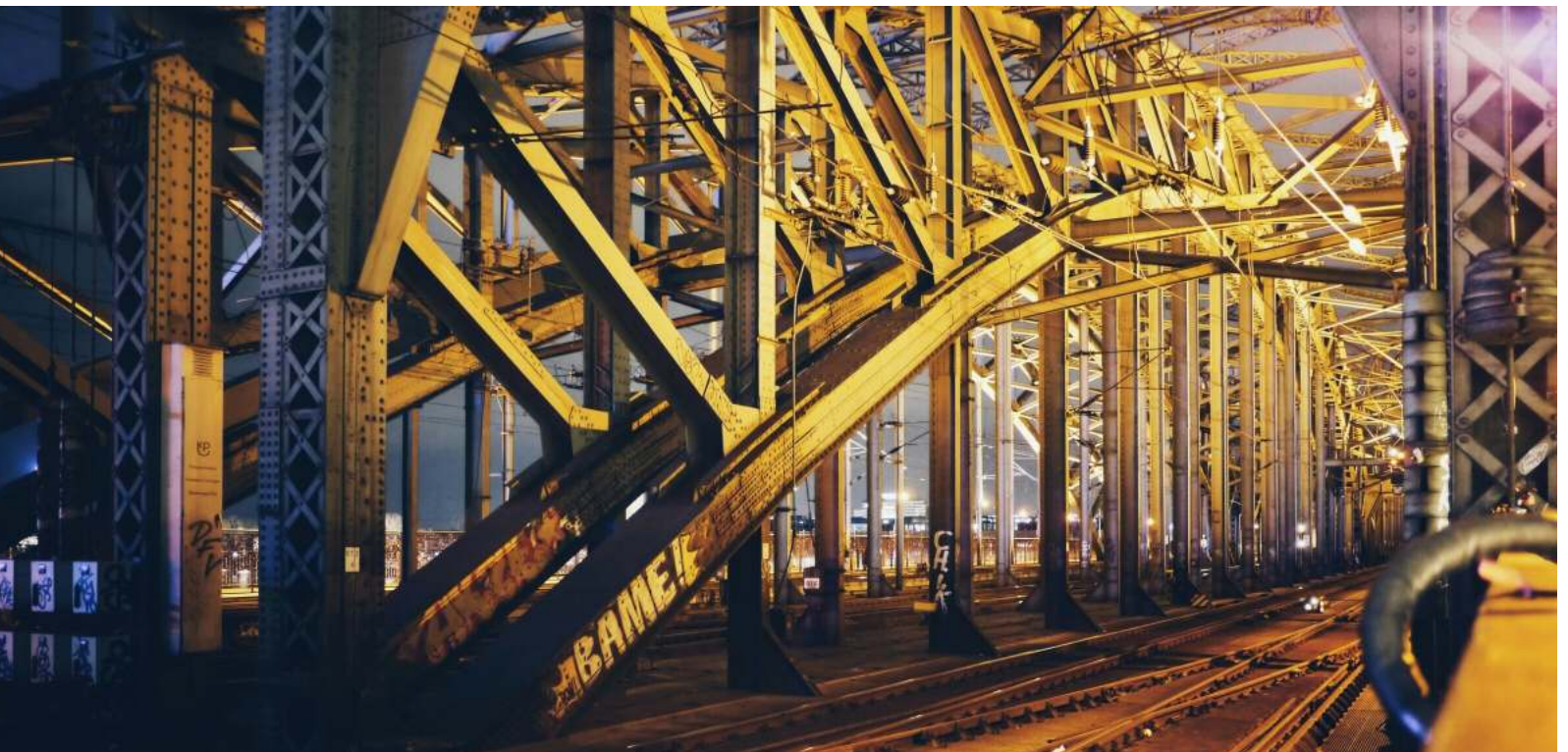
<https://myrailroadretirement.com/retired-before-62-why-you-may-need-to-increase-tax-withholding/>

For more detailed information, you can refer to the [RRB website](#) or consult [IRS publications related to retirement benefits](#).

13. What happens to my benefits if I remarry?

Remarriage can affect railroad retirement benefits, particularly for spouses and survivors. Employee annuities remain unaffected, while spouse and survivor benefits may terminate if remarriage occurs before certain ages. Also, depends on if the divorced or surviving remarried spouse is caring for a minor or a qualifying disabled person.

Also, see the next question for more detailed information about divorced and survivor annuities.



14. What survivor benefits are available for my family?

Survivor benefits available for families under the Railroad Retirement Act include widow(er)'s annuities, surviving divorced spouse annuities, and parent's annuities. Eligibility is based on marriage duration, age, disability, and child care responsibilities. The benefits are calculated based on the deceased employee's earnings, and applications should be filed promptly with the RRB. For more detailed information:

Types of Survivor Benefits

Widow(er)'s Annuity:

- A widow or widower can receive an annuity if they were married to the employee for at least nine months before the employee's death, unless the death was due to an accident.
- The widow(er) must be at least 60 years old or 50 years old if disabled. They can also qualify at any age if they are caring for the deceased employee's child who is under 18 or disabled.

Surviving Divorced Spouse Annuity:

- A **divorced spouse** may be eligible if they were married to the employee for at least 10 years and are at least 62 years old. They must not be currently married.
- If the divorced spouse is caring for the employee's child who is under 16 or disabled, they can qualify at any age.

Parent's Annuity:

- A parent of the deceased employee may qualify for benefits if they were dependent on the employee for at least half of their support.

What survivor benefits are available for my family?

Answers to question 14 continued

Eligibility Requirements

- **Marriage Duration:** Generally, the marriage must have lasted for at least nine months before the employee's death for a widow(er) to qualify.
- **Age and Disability:** The widow(er) must meet age requirements or be disabled. For a surviving divorced spouse, the age requirement is 62.
- **Child Care:** If the widow(er) or divorced spouse is caring for a minor or disabled child of the deceased, they may qualify for benefits regardless of age.

Benefit Amounts

- The amount of the survivor annuity is based on the deceased employee's earnings and the type of annuity. Generally, the widow(er) receives a tier I benefit, which is equivalent to what would be received under Social Security.
- The tier II portion may also be available, depending on the employee's service and earnings

Application Process

- Applications for survivor benefits must be filed with the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). It is advisable to apply as soon as possible after the employee's death to ensure timely processing.
- Required documentation typically includes proof of marriage, proof of age, and any relevant financial information.

What survivor benefits are available for my family?

Answers to question 14 continued

4. Check for Written Notices

- After you submit your application, the RRB will send you written notices regarding the status of your application. If you have not received any communication within the expected timeframe, it's advisable to follow up using the methods above.



15. How do I check the status of my application?

You can check the status of your application by calling the RRB HelpLine, logging into your myRRB account, contacting your local RRB office, or checking for written notices from the RRB. For more details:

1. Questions about unemployment or sickness benefits use the RRB Automated HelpLine

- Call the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) toll-free at **1-877-772-5772**. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Press 1 to access the self-serve menu, and then press 1 again for options regarding unemployment and [sickness benefits](#).

2. Online Access via myRRB

- If you have set up an account on the RRB's online portal, **myRRB**, you can log in to check the status of your application.
- Visit [RRB.gov/myRRB](https://www.RRB.gov/myRRB) to access your account. Here, you can view your application status, benefit payments, and other related information.

3. Contact Your Local RRB Office

- You can also contact your local RRB field office directly for assistance. You can find the contact information and operating hours for your nearest office by visiting the [RRB Field Office Locator](#) or by calling the toll-free number mentioned above.

16. Can I receive benefits if I worked for multiple railroads?

Yes, you can receive railroad retirement benefits even if you have worked for multiple railroads. Here's more information:

1. Creditable Service

- The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) combines your service from all railroads to determine your eligibility for benefits. This means that all your years of service across different railroads count towards your total service time, which is crucial for qualifying for retirement, disability, or survivor benefits.

2. Current Connection Requirement

- To qualify for certain benefits, you must have a “current connection” with the railroad industry. This generally means you need to have worked for a railroad in at least 12 of the 30 consecutive months before your annuity begins. If you have worked for multiple railroads, your combined service can help you meet this requirement.

3. Types of Benefits

- **Retirement Benefits:** If you have enough combined service, you can qualify for retirement benefits regardless of how many railroads you worked for.
- **Disability Benefits:** Similarly, if you meet the service requirements, you can qualify for disability benefits based on your combined service.
- **Survivor Benefits:** If you pass away, your survivors can also receive benefits based on your total service across all railroads.

4. Application Process

- When applying for benefits, you will need to provide information about your employment history with all railroads. The RRB will use this information to calculate your benefits based on your total service.

17. How do I report a change in my income?

To report a change in your income to the RRB, you can call their HelpLine, use the myRRB online service, or send a written notification. Ensure you gather all necessary information and documentation before reporting.

Gather Necessary Information:

Before reporting, gather all relevant information regarding your income, including:

- The type of income (e.g., wages, self-employment income).
- The amount of income you are currently receiving.
- Any documentation that supports your income change (e.g., pay stubs, tax returns).

Non-work income such as investment earnings, interest, pensions, gifts, inheritances, and capital gains do not count towards earnings.



18. What is the process for appealing a unemployment or sickness benefits denied claim?

The appeal process involves requesting reconsideration, appealing to the H&A, potentially requesting a hearing, and further appealing to the three-member Board and then to a U.S. Court of Appeals if necessary. It is crucial to adhere to the specified timeframes at each step to maintain your appeal rights. For more detailed information:

1. Request for Reconsideration:

- If your claim is denied, you must file a written request for reconsideration within 60 days from the date of the decision notice. This request should be sent to the RRB office that made the **original decision**.

2. Appeal to Bureau of Hearings and Appeals (H&A):

- If you disagree with the reconsideration decision, you can appeal to the Bureau of Hearings and Appeals within **60 days** using **RRB Form HA-1**. This form is available on the RRB website or at any RRB field office.

3. Hearing Process:

- The H&A may conduct an investigation and, if your case involves a question of fact, you have the right to request an oral hearing, which can be conducted over the phone or in person at your local RRB office.

4. Further Appeals:

- If you are still dissatisfied, you can appeal to the three-member Board within **60 days** of the H&A's (Hearing and Appeals) decision, again using **RRB Form HA-1**. If you disagree with the Board's decision, you may file a petition for review with the U.S. Court of Appeals within **90 days**.

5. Employer Protests:

- Employers may protest the payment of benefits, but such protests do not prevent the timely payment of benefits. If the protest is successful, you may be required to repay benefits.

19. How do I find out if I'm eligible for Medicare?

In summary, you can find out if you're eligible for Medicare based on your age (65 or older), disability status (entitled to benefits for 24 months), and current connection with railroad employment. To determine your eligibility for [Medicare](#), you can follow these steps:

Age Requirement

Generally, you are eligible for Medicare when you turn 65 years old. Enrollment is automatic for those receiving railroad retirement benefits at this age.

Disability Status

If you are under 65, you may qualify for Medicare if you have been entitled to monthly benefits based on total disability for at least **24 months**. There is no waiting period for those diagnosed with **Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)** or permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a transplant.

Current Connection with Railroad Employment

If you have a current connection with the railroad industry, you may also be eligible for Medicare benefits. This generally means you must have worked for a railroad in at least **12 of the 30 consecutive months** before your annuity begins.

Contact the RRB and Visit the RRB Website

For personalized assistance, you can contact the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) at **1-877-772-5772**. They can provide information specific to your situation and help you understand your eligibility.

You can also visit the [RRB website - Medicare](#) for more information on Medicare eligibility and benefits.

20. Can I receive benefits if I work part-time after retirement?

Yes, you can receive railroad retirement benefits while working part-time after retirement. In summary, you can receive railroad retirement benefits while working part-time, but your earnings may affect your tier I and tier II benefits depending on your age and the amount earned. It is crucial to report all earnings to the RRB. There are specific conditions and potential deductions to consider:

Earnings Limitations

If you are under full retirement age, your tier I benefits may be reduced if your earnings exceed certain limits. For 2024, the annual exempt amount is **\$22,320**. For every \$2 earned over this limit, \$1 will be deducted from your tier I benefits.

Full Retirement Age

Once you reach full retirement age, there are no earnings limitations, and you can earn any amount without affecting your tier I benefits.

Tier II Benefits

Your tier II benefits may also be affected by your earnings, regardless of your age. If you work for your last pre-retirement non railroad employer, your tier II benefits will be reduced by \$1 for every \$2 earned and it continues through your full retirement age.

Reporting Requirements

It is essential to report all earnings, including part-time work, to the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) to ensure accurate benefit calculations and avoid overpayments.

Closing

By understanding these areas of the railroad retirement system, you can better navigate the process of applying for, receiving, and maintaining your benefits. Remember, the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) is a valuable resource, and their representatives are available to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have.

Also, creator of My Railroad Retirement and Certified Financial Planner, André Small provides comprehensive financial planning services at A Small Investment, LLC.

As you highball on your retirement journey, we hope this guide has provided you with the knowledge and confidence to make the most of your railroad retirement benefits. Wishing you a fulfilling and financially secure retirement!

Sources:

Railroad Unemployment and Sickness Benefits

U.S. Railroad Retirement Board. (2024). Railroad Unemployment and Sickness Benefits UB-9. Retrieved from [RRB.gov\(n.d., p. 1,4-5\)](#).

Railroad Retirement Handbook

U.S. Railroad Retirement Board. (2024). Railroad Retirement Handbook. Retrieved from [RRB.gov\(n.d., pp. 1-4\)](#).

Medicare Information

U.S. Railroad Retirement Board. (2024). Health Insurance for the Aged and Disabled. Retrieved from [RRB.gov\(n.d., pp. 57-58\)](#).

Myths and Facts about Railroad Retirement

U.S. Railroad Retirement Board. (2019). Myths and Facts about Railroad Retirement. Retrieved from [RRB.gov\(n.d., pp. 1-2\)](#).

Railroad Retirement Age Reductions U.S. Railroad Retirement Board. (2024). Railroad Retirement Age Reductions QA1605. Retrieved from [RRB.gov\(Railroad Retirement Information, n.d., pp. 2-4\)](#).

Appeals Process for Unemployment and Sickness Benefits

U.S. Railroad Retirement Board. (2024). Appeals Process. Retrieved from [RRB.gov\(n.d.-a, p. 49, n.d.-b, pp. 54-56\)](#).

General Information on Railroad Retirement U.S. Railroad Retirement Board. (2024). General Information on Railroad Retirement. Retrieved from [RRB.gov\(n.d., pp. 2-4\)](#).

My Railroad Retirement - myrailroadretirement.com

Compiled from various insights on the [My Railroad Retirement Website](#) in 2024.

André Small, CFP®, MBA

In this ebook, I provide clear answers to the top 20 questions railroad retirees and pre-retirees have asked about their Railroad Retirement benefits. With over 15 years of financial planning experience, my firm specializes in helping individuals like you navigate the complexities of retirement planning with confidence. Whether you're just starting to plan or are nearing retirement, this guide will help you make informed decisions about your future. If you're ready for personalized advice, I invite you to [schedule a meeting with me](#). Together, we'll create a plan that aligns with your goals and priorities.



My Railroad Retirement ("MRRR") is solely owned by A Small Investment, LLC. A Small Investment, LLC ("ASI") is a registered investment advisor offering advisory services in the State of Texas and in other jurisdictions where exempted. Registration does not imply a certain level of skill or training. My Railroad Retirement and A Small Investment, LLC, its owners, officers, directors, employees, subsidiaries, service providers, content providers, and any third-party affiliates do not offer the sale of securities or other investments. The information on this site is not intended as tax, accounting or legal advice, as an offer or solicitation of an offer to buy or sell, or as an endorsement of any company, security, fund, or other securities or non-securities offering. The information on this site should not be relied upon for purposes of transacting in securities or other investment vehicles. The information on this site is provided "AS IS" and without warranties of any kind either express or implied. To the fullest extent permissible pursuant to applicable laws, My Railroad Retirement and A Small Investment, LLC disclaims all warranties, express or implied, including, but not limited to, implied warranties of merchantability, non-infringement, and suitability for a particular purpose. ASI does not warrant that the information will be free from error. Your use of the information is at your sole risk. Under no circumstances shall ASI be liable for any direct, indirect, special or consequential damages that result from the use of, or the inability to use, the information provided on this site, even if MRRR and ASI or a MRRR and ASI authorized representative has been advised of the possibility of such damages. Information contained on this site should not be considered a solicitation to buy, an offer to sell, or a recommendation of any security in any jurisdiction where such offer, solicitation, or recommendation would be unlawful or unauthorized.