

Railroad Jobs: A Highly Skilled and Compensated Workforce

Freight rail employees are highly skilled professionals who are among the best-compensated workers in the nation. The industry attracts employees from a wide range of backgrounds — from high school graduates to those holding graduate degrees — to help safely transport the raw materials, products and finished goods that sustain the nation's economy and people.

Railroads provide the opportunity to build lifelong careers in fields such as engineering, law enforcement, information technology and industrial development. And with a strong track record of hiring America's veterans, rail companies are military-friendly employers.

Because of high wages and benefits, technical training and professional growth opportunities, freight rail employees often stay in the industry for their entire careers. Many have family railroad legacies that stretch back generations.

At a Glance

- **Private Investments**
Railroads spent more than \$660 billion on their privately owned networks between 1980 and 2017. That's more than 40 cents out of every revenue dollar.
- **Nationwide Workforce**
In 2017, freight railroads had approximately 165,000 employees.
- **Well-compensated**
Freight rail employee compensation, including benefits, averages approximately \$120,000 per year, among the highest of any major U.S. industry. By contrast, in 2016, the average full-time employee compensation (including benefits) in the U.S. was \$74,000.
- **Military-friendly**
Nearly 20% of current employees are veterans, and railroads aim to hire many new employees with military backgrounds.
- **Excellent Retirement Benefits**
Railroad retirees are covered by the Railroad Retirement System instead of Social Security. Today, over 650,000 beneficiaries receive more than \$12 billion in benefits from Railroad Retirement annually.
- **Union Representation**
Approximately 82% of Class I rail employees are unionized, rail employees are represented by one or more of a dozen different labor unions. The Railway Labor Act governs collective bargaining between freight railroads and their employees.