



SYSTEM COUNCIL NO. 6

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS

Tom Owens
General Chairman

Shannon Spotswood
Vice Chairman

Mike Stacks
Secretary-Treasurer

General Chairman's Report – March, 2021

Brothers and Sisters:

Risk Reduction Program: Required by FRA Part 271, the carriers must develop and implement this program which will require heavy employee involvement. I have participated in two meetings this month. The carrier will be revamping the Safety Committee concepts. I have challenged their assumption that the current employees have time to do this. As part of the discussions, the Carrier has agreed to open up the RRP SharePoint to access to the IBEW and other unions for accountability of the information.

PLB 5332: We are awaiting funding from the National Mediation Board for an arbitrator to hear our cases.

Medical Delays: A virtual meeting was held with Medical Services and Labor Relations discussing the excessive delays in the process. The Carrier appears very proactive in its attempts to streamline and approve their automated response system. However, I have submitted several issues involving the content of what is being sent, not just the issue of the timing of reply. The following information was shared by the carrier:
A few tips to help speed up our members return to work:

1. Use a personal email to contact Health Services preferred method of access:
Notifyhealthservices@nscorp.com
2. The Carrier is moving away from individual case worker's email addresses to the master email listed above. The master email is monitored by all case workers to eliminate delays due to an individual case worker not being available. The email response rate is presently up to 7 days with the telephone response rate being around 10 - 14 days.
3. When notifying Health Services of a return to work, the initial email needs to contain (at minimum): Employee contact information (EIN, Cell, email, address), RRB Proof of Disability form, UHC Proof of Disability form, treating physician return with no restrictions note, and some/all medical records indicating nature of condition. Without some medical information regarding the nature of condition, Health Services cannot fill out RRB/UHC Proof of Disability forms.
4. Submitted initial Proof of Disability forms will be filled out for a 30-day period. If an exchange of further information (records) is necessary, the employee must submit additional Proof of Disability forms to extend benefits. Health Services is attempting to maintain a 3 day turn around on these Proof of Disability forms.
5. External access of Health Services information: http://www.nscorp.com/content/nscorp/en/work-at-ns/employees/employee-resources/health-services.html?fbclid=IwAR1Ex20U_VDTDc5ZznIdiefwtrQG5rkJ39PTZpBL-gB0ODIMQTVNsNNtk8E

National Negotiations: On March 24, 2021, our collective bargaining unit presented labor's desired rule changes. These proposals included: increased vacation, personal leave with reduced qualifications; increased bereavement with more eligible family members; increased holidays; no bridging restrictions; increased 401k; increased/more differentials; sick days; off track vehicle accident coverage increase; scheduled breaks; and elimination of subcontracting provisions. The next meetings are set for April 28 & 29.

Active Claims: In addition to normal calls and information requests, the Council opened 7 trackable cases, while continuing to handle a total of 80 active cases. Any issue that involves disciplines/claims advanced to the Council, letter responses, medical delay documentation, RRB benefit issues, health insurance issues, etc., generate a case file with the Council.

National Health & Welfare Claims: As part of the national negotiations' efforts, a lawsuit was filed against the Carriers for their attempt to force members to switch health providers yearly based on cost through an "administrative" decision as opposed to a negotiated right. The lawsuit was dismissed by the courts as a matter to be handled under the grievance process. In a coordinated effort across the country among the Organizations, I have filed a claim for each agreement that our members are represented under the System Council 6 umbrella.

FRA: I participated in a preparatory meeting with the IO on March 03, 2021. The FRA virtual meeting was held the following day. A chief point discussed was inconsistent requirement of electrician's HOS forms across different railroads. Communication systems tend to fall in the not covered service category. A chief concern raised was an increasing wave of predictive maintenance reporting by newer equipment. This type of equipment foregoes the shorter-term maintenance based on a set number of days. The equipment reports to the back-office performance issues that might require maintenance/repair before a regularly scheduled longer-term maintenance date.

Travel: VC travel to Chicago for member vehicle accident investigation. GC travel to Chattanooga to represent member for three points of contact/conduct unbecoming investigation.

System Council 6 Convention: Convention Call notices were sent to our local unions. The convention is scheduled for June 8 & 9, 2021 at DreamMore Resort (Dollywood), Pigeon Forge, TN. We are still planning on an in-person convention but will have certain vendors participating by virtual conferencing.

In Your Service,

Tom Owens
General Chairman