First trip rates negotiated; others expected soon

CLEVELAND – Ending the dual basis of pay between pre-1985 and post-1985 rail operating employees represented by the UTU was a principal objective of the ratified contract between UTU and most major railroads.

The ratified national agreement ends the two-tier wage system for post-1985 employees without diminishing the earnings capability of pre-1985 employees.

Trip rates, currently being negotiated by general chairpersons on a property-by-property basis and district-by-district, are to be based upon earnings of pre-1985 employees.

Trip rates are being developed locally, there is flexibility to tailor trip rates to fit the special needs of every district.

The first trip rates agreement was negotiated by Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) General Chairperson Robert D. Kerley (GO-201), with assistance from Local 303 Chairperson Steve McElhany and Local 947 Chairperson Don Seyer. They were effective last month on BNSF’s former St. Louis-San Francisco Railway property, and govern runs between Springfield and Thayer, Mo., and between Chaffee, Mo., and Memphis, Tenn.

Other trip-rate agreements currently are nearing completion on BNSF and CSX.

“The local BNSF trip rates we negotiated accurately reflect the actual earnings of pre-1985 employees in that pool, based upon a test period covering the calendar year 2001, with those wages adjusted for intervening pay increases,” Kerley said.

“The trip rates include only those elements identified as ‘national pay elements’ in Article V, Section 5, of the Aug. 20, 2002, ratified national agreement. All other pay elements remain intact and will be paid just as before, including crew consist allowances, held-away-from-home terminal pay, etc.,” Kerley said.

In territories affected by the BNSF agreement, each pool will have two separate trip rates—a flip trip rate when service and deadhead are combined into and out of the away-from-home terminal; and a basic trip rate for all other trips, includ-

Trip rates make paychecks predictable

“UTU for Life” serves retirees

CLEVELAND – Retirement should not mean abandoning workplace friends, losing touch with your industry’s current events and not having influence over public policy issues affecting retirement.

To keep UTU members together and informed and to amplify their voices on public policy matters of importance to them and their families, “UTU for Life” is being created.

UTU for Life is an expansion of the UTU Retiree Club and its greatest strength will be at the local level.

UTU for Life will bring UTU retirees and active members together for luncheons and other activities aimed at fellowship, information and political action.

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“Our retired members from the air, rail and

Continued on page 10

UTU urges rail safety summit

CLEVELAND – Officials of every major freight railroad have been urged by UTU International President Byron A. Boyd Jr. to meet with him and other senior UTU officials to discuss railroad safety following the tragic deaths of four UTU members and the critical injury of another last month. “Initial responses indicate all major railroads will send senior officials,” Boyd said.

“We are all aware that working on the railroad is one of the most dangerous occupations in America,” Boyd said. “When rail operating employees are injured, too often they lose a limb, or die. Rail workers know this and work accordingly. They are highly trained in handling large and dangerous equipment in difficult conditions and bad weather. Each accident must be seen by

Continued on page 10
Local 171, Aurora, Ill.

Retired former conductors’ Local Chairperson Robert Tinsley was presented with a UTTU Brass Lantern by Local President Roy Coan in recognition of more than 26 years of service to the membership at the annual holiday dinner held on Jan. 23. Coan said speakers at the dinner included Railroad Retirement Board Representative Bob Eggert, United Healthcare Representative Jim Reess, and Furlong & Romanchuk, who represented Designated Legal Counsel Yeager, Jungbauer, Barczak & Vucinovich, P.L.C., sponsors of the event. A raffle awarded candle baskets from Savor the Scents to members Jim Davis, William Christiansen, Dar- ryl Bennet and Robert Lumnley.

Local 262, Boston, Mass.

Member Al Craven is inviting members to a fundraising party to help more expenses related to the kidney transplant needed by his brother Darryl, who is receiving the desperately needed organ from his sister Nancy. The party, which will include a cash bar, dinner, food, and a 50/50 raffle, will be held from 7 p.m. to midnight on Friday, March 14, at the AOH Hall, 58 Lowell St. in Wellesley. For information or to purchase an attendance ticket in advance, contact Brother Craven at (781) 598-6809, or write to him at 60 Briar Hill Dr., Lynn, MA 01902.

Local 313, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Those involved in the preservation effort surrounding the SS City of Milwaukee, one of the last railcar ferries to work the Great Lakes, recently received $1,250 from Designated Legal Counsel hoey, Farina and Downes as part of the law firm’s matching grant program, said George P. Micka IV. For information about the ship, contact Micka at (231) 755-8755, send him e-mail at scstyclopedia@look.com, or view the website at http://www.carferry.com.

Local 340, Connellsville, Pa.

Members continue to seek financial assistance for 30-year CSXT conductor Jim Means, whose cancer-stricken wife, Gaya, is undergoing chemotherapy. The cost of child care is not covered by insurance, said R.C. “Randy” Matthias, who noted that an item last month noting the address where donations could be sent was in error. Send donations to the Means family at 624 Breakneck Rd., Connellsville, PA 15425.

Local 422, Vancouver, B.C.

Although members of the local were grateful for exposure received from a recent article in the UTU News, they pointed out a typographical error incorrectly identifying their local treasurer, who is the much-appreciated Mitch Hodge, said Local President John Cowan. Meanwhile, Brother Cowan said he collects and trades railway uniforms, caps, badges, uniforms, lanterns, etc., and is especially eager to hear from fellow members interested in purchasing caps, badges, uniforms, etc., and is especially eager to hear from fellow members interested in purchasing railroad uniforms, caps, badges, and lanterns, etc. He is also available to work on a price list for the sale of his collection. He also said his wife of 49 years, Luisa, and his four grown children were very excited about his show-bizturn. While he’d welcome another opportunity to appear on TV, Ramirez hasn’t run out and hired an agent.

In fact, he said MTA operators could retire after 23 years of service, but the 68-year-old’s only plans are to continue driving. “I like everything about this job,” Ramirez said.

Ramirez said prior to becoming an MTA employee, he spent five years as a bus operator with the Chicago Transit Authority. “I moved out here to get away from the winter,” said Ramirez, who not only found a place in the sun, but ended up in the spotlight.

Local 469, Madison, Ill.

The Midwest Rail Radio sponsored their seventh annual Superbowl Sunday Poker Tournament, where $1,000 was raised to assist the Foursquare Church and food pantry, which provides food and assistance to the needy in the St.

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Operator Philip Ramirez of Local 1608, Chatsworth, Calif., had his first experience as an actor when he appeared on two recent episodes of the Fox television series “24.” (Photo courtesy Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.)

**L.A. bus operator adds reality to show**

With “reality” TV all the rage, various shows have been incorporating real elements into their scripts to keep viewers tuning in each week. The hit suspense-drama series “24,” shown in 24 one-hour segments, features a clock that runs in real time. In the episode “24,” a situation was created that he could actually be seen as the bus operator behind the wheel of a real UTU-represented bus operator.

Coincidentally, Philip Ramirez, a member of Local 1608 in Chatsworth, Calif., has been a bus operator with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) for 24 years. He’s appeared in just two episodes of Fox television’s “24.”

The West Valley Division 8 operator was barely visible in his first appearance behind the wheel of Metro Bus 7411. But in the second episode in which he participated, he can clearly be seen as the bus stops to pick up star Kiefer Sutherland.

“It was very exciting,” said Ramirez, who had no previous acting experience. “I guess I was picked based on my appearance. They asked MTA to recommend someone, and they picked me because I’m always dressed sharp.”

Ramirez said it took about six hours to film one of the scenes he’s in, which was shot late last September in Canoga Park, Calif.

He also said his wife of 49 years, Luisa, and his four grown children were very excited about his show-biz turn. While he’d welcome another opportunity to appear on TV, Ramirez hasn’t run out and hired an agent.

Local 583, Fond du Lac, Wisc.

This Canadian National (formerly Wisconsin Central) local recently elected conductor Jason Elm to the newly created position of public relations officer when he learned he was an Opera- tion Lifesaver presenter. Brother Elm, along with conductor and Vice General Chairperson James Wathan Jr., recently completed a presentation at Roberts Elementary School in Fond du Lac, and plans to give presentations to other groups in the area, Wathan said.

Local 773, Galveston, Tex.

Members of this BNSF local are making plans for a picnic in May, said Local Chairperson Joey Stubbs and Local President Don Neuwieler. Information about the picnic can be discussed at regular meetings, held at 4:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at the Galveston Daily News Building, Metropolis. Members offer best wishes to Ken Lister, who retired in February.

Local 1373, Philadelphia, Pa.

Now in outpatient therapy, 12-year-old Cecelia Betsön, daughter of member Bill Betsön, continues to make great progress healing from burns suf- fered in an accident, said Local President Tony Mirarchi, who joined the family in thanking all those who generously donated funds to help offset the expenses related to her treatment.

Local 1813, West Colton, Calif.

Union Pacific switchmen in this local are reminding all UTU members that plans are being made for the 25th annual two-man scramble golf tournament, tentatively set to be held at El Ran- cho Verde Golf Course, said Local Chairperson Rick Renna. All UTU members are invited. For information, contact Renna at (909) 946-8984.

Local 1908, Buffalo, N.Y.

Members of this bus operators’ local send their best wishes to Judith Palistrant, who recently retired after operating a school bus for Cornell National School Bus and finally Laadlaw Transit for 36 years without an accident, according to Secretary Joann L. Ehnhardt.

Local 1933, Washington, D.C.

Amtrak Local Chairperson Ray Cunningham recently gratefully acknowledged the invaluable assistance received from Amtrak Labor Relations Officer Jim Ryan, who played a key role in restor- ing and protecting the rights and benefits of Amtrak Zone 5 assistant conductor K. L. Sparks, who experienced a break in service when he was called to active military duty from August 2001 through August 2002. Cunningham, who also serves as director of the UTU Human Rights Committee, noted that the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act, 38 U.S.C. Section 4316, specifically states “A person who is re-employed is entitled to the seniority and other rights and benefits determined by seniority that the person had on the date of the commence- ment of service in the uniformed services plus the additional seniority and rights and bene- fits that such a person would have attained if the person had remained continuously employed.”
North Dakota

The North Dakota Legislative Board is leading the charge against SB 2314, a bill that would repeal the state's corporate and personal income taxes and expand the state's sales tax to recover lost revenue. Legislative Director John Risch said that because no consumer-interest groups have stepped to the forefront to oppose the tax changes, it is up to labor, particularly UTU, to protect citizens from corporate excess.

In his testimony before the Senate Committee on Finance and Taxation, Risch said: “At issue is fundamental fairness. It isn’t fair to take the most prosperous entities in North Dakota off the state rolls and shift the tax burden onto the rest of us.”

“Raising and expanding the sales tax is more harmful to moderate and lower income people than to affluent people because lower income people spend more of their disposable income on taxable items...It would place more of the tax burden on moderate and low income people who provide the most tax relief for the wealthiest among us.”

Unfortunately, the Senate passed the bill on Feb. 20 and has forwarded it to the House of Representatives for consideration.

New Jersey

The fiscal 2004 budget proposed by Gov. James McGreevey in February contains $1.1 billion in transportation capital spending, according to the Associated Press.

Although the budget calls for a 5% reduction in operating costs at the state Department of Transportation, New Jersey Transit's $260-million operating subsidy would not change under the proposal.

The governor has also pledged not to raise New Jersey Transit fares in the coming fiscal year, but the agency will impose approximately $27 million in spending cuts through a reduction of about 170 nonunion, administrative workers.

“With a budget deficit of some $5 billion, we're glad to see that the governor has seen fit not to raise fares or reduce services,” said Legislative Director Dan O'Connell. “This is a perfect example of how TPEL works to protect our members' livelihood.”

Persistence pays

“Each department of our organization, the United Transportation Union will be even stronger in the future than it is today. If everyone resolved a problem or settled a dispute let them know that you appreciate their cooperation and teamwork. Officers and members who share a common direction and a sense of responsibility that the problem is serious and will be seriously considered achievable if they are to be resolved. Optimism is a key ingredient to "goal reaching.” Lack of optimism can often become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

“Optimism is like a forest fire. You can smell it for miles before you see it burning,” Optimism is contagious and creates teamwork, which produces positive results.

Cooperation and teamwork are cardinal principles of good union representation. Officers and members who share a common direction and a sense of community can achieve goals more quickly and easily because of the strength drawn from one another.

Get involved. When a sister or brother is having a difficult time handling the load, offer to assist. Lend a helping hand. When your representatives have resolved a problem or settled a dispute let them know that you appreciate their hard work and achievements.

By standing behind our leadership and applying these principles on every local committee, general committee, legislative board and in each department of our organization, the United Transportation Union will be even stronger in the future than it is today.

Arizona

Arizona State Legislative Director Scott Olson (center) presents UTU shirts to Local 1081 Chairperson Glenn Bay (left) and Legislative Representative Steve Coffey at the local's monthly meeting. As a result of their efforts, Olson said, Local 1081 is now the leading UTU local in the state in per capita contributions.

Arizona

Texas

The Bexar County Rural Rail Transportation District has invited representatives of both the UTU and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe to a March 3 meeting to discuss dual rail access to a new Toyota manufacturing plant. San Antonio was chosen as the site for Toyota's new North American assembly plant, an $800-million facility that will initially employ some 2,000 people, but the company stipulated that it must have access to at least two railroad carriers.

The proposed site was recently served only by UP, which to date has not agreed to sell trackage rights on its line to NS.

The district is charged with building an estimated $22-million rail spur to the site in the event no agreement can be reached, said Legislative Director and district member Connie English.

North Carolina

At the invitation of Legislative Board Chairperson Sheldon Spain, Cong. Bob Etheridge (D-N.C.) visited CSX employees at Rocky Mount and joined them in a CSX locomotive cab for a 90-minute ride to Fayetteville.

“The congressman continues to increase his knowledge of the rail industry. He asked many questions concerning train velocity, fuel economics, safety, road-crossing violations, meeting trains and many others,” said Spain. “He said he enjoyed the trip and learned a lot about rail movements.”

This is the second train trip that Spain has arranged for Etheridge in the past year, said Legislative Director Richard Westbrook.

“Congressman Etheridge has a better knowledge now of the problems railroaders face every day when they come to work. I would like to thank Sheldon for his hard work in arranging these trips.”

“I would also like to thank the UTU officers and CSX officers in Rocky Mount for making this happen,” Westbrook said.

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Art of negotiation requires patience

Those who imagine that the most effective means of gaining what we want is to march in the streets forget lessons of childhood: throwing tantrums is not likely to produce more than a lot of noise.

Achieving objectives at the bargaining table is much like planning a long trip. There are many routes – some better, some worse. Those most successful at achieving positive results devise a strategy, pay attention to detail, remain flexible and are patient.

It would be nice – and convenient – if we could unilaterally change the culture of Norfolk Southern so that no manager intimidates injured employees. It would be nice – and convenient – if we could unilaterally tell carriers they may not reduce the quality of health care or cease paying 100% of the costs. It would be nice – and convenient – if we could unilaterally eliminate availability policies.

The art of successful negotiations, whether to solve family disputes or those between labor and management, is to make the list of agreed items longer and the list of unsettled items shorter. This is best accomplished when each party addresses the other's needs and concerns in a positive manner.

It is easy to get impatient with the process, but impatience often leads to third party intervention, which almost never produces the desired results. Few things worthwhile are accomplished without lobbying assistance from the UTU. That fact is echoed repeatedly by lawmakers.

Yet, there is one railroad that does not understand the value of our help or that life is a two-way street. I am talking about Norfolk Southern so that no manager intimidates injured employees. That is apparent in recent years. Major railroads are now paying about $900 per employee per month for the care of injured employees. And, because there are fewer injury reports, NS wins the highest Harriman Award each year.

We are exploring, for example, innovative wellness programs to keep us from getting sick, tailoring health-care based upon family status and age and embraced alternatives to traditional health care, there has been no attempt – until now – to do so in the railroad industry.

It is time for Norfolk Southern to become a more responsible employer and member of the railroad community. This is an open invitation to NS to end intimidation of injured employees.

You can have your UTU always trying to display a positive attitude in dealing with carriers. We strive to be a supportive partner and reach out in good faith wherever there is opportunity for mutual benefit.

Examples include our lobbying support in the railroads’ fight against bigger trucks, against coal slurry pipelines and against rail-shipping attempts to force carriers into a race to the bottom through so-called open access – the equivalent of opening a factory and its machinery to use by others than the owner and its employees.

Railroads know they would not have been successful without lobbying assistance from the UTU. That fact is echoed repeatedly by lawmakers.

Yet, there is one railroad that does not understand the value of our help or that life is a two-way street. I am talking about Norfolk Southern Railway (NS).

Almost every NS employee represented by this union believes that when they are injured, there will be a company investigation followed by disciplinary action.

Seeking immediate medical attention for injured employees must be made a priority for Norfolk Southern. Injured employees should not be intimidated to keep them from reporting injuries.

NS is apparently content to simply deny there is a problem. Since the threat of disciplinary actions causes the suppression of injury reporting, there are few disciplinary actions.

Art of negotiation requires patience

Preserving our health care

By Byron A. Boyd Jr.

Under the long discarded Roman calendar, certain sacred days were known as ides. In March, the ides fell on the 15th – the date Julius Caesar was assassinated in the Roman Senate. Shakespeare immortalized the event by having a fortune teller advise Caesar, “Beware the ides of March.”

Today, that fortune teller might advise us to beware the status quo as to health care. Caesar ignored his warning and lost his life. Your UTU is not ignoring the warning about health care. We are looking outside the box at ways to preserve our health care benefits and keep them affordable.

Our health care benefits negotiated with rail carriers are among the best available anywhere. Unlike government-provided health care in Canada, for example, we have almost instant access to health care providers and we are not forced to wait months for urgent treatment such as radiation therapy and many types of surgeries.

A problem faced in the U.S. is that the cost of health care has been rising at almost 20% annually in recent years. Major railroads are now paying about $900 per employee per month for the health care coverage we enjoy. Many studies suggest there is no end in sight to medical-cost inflation.

That is why rail carriers seek substantial health care cost sharing from employees. Your UTU believes there are better ways of preserving your quality health care than you simply open your wallet and handing back to the carrier your hard-earned wages.

Indeed, the national contract with most major railroads that you ratified last year contains a crucial section on health care benefits. The carriers agreed to examine plan redesign, cost containment, cost sharing, administrative change and vendor review. This separates UTU from the unfavorable settlement and arbitration awards of other organizations.

UTU has engaged consultants on medicine and health care plans to assist us in negotiations with the carriers. We have made clear to the carriers that simply sharing the increase in medical-cost inflation does nothing to control that inflation and ensure UTU members retain the valuable health care benefits now enjoyed.

In recent negotiating sessions, we discussed that the carriers’ health care plan has never been audited to ensure premium dollars are being spent wisely. While other industries and their employees have explored and embraced alternatives to traditional health care, there has been no attempt – until now – to do so in the railroad industry.

Progressive approaches have won for us better pay, benefits and job protection. A progressive approach to health care will continue to keep your UTU in the driver’s seat.

Intimidation of workers by NS must stop

By James Brunkenhoefer

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Observations of a UTU engineer

by Robert D. Kerley
UTU General Chairperson, BNSF

I have been a locomotive engineer for 25 years, successfully completing the UTU engineer training program and Federal Railroad Administration engineer certification and re-certification.

I have always felt a healthy professional satisfaction in those accomplishments. However, I never assumed that my being an engineer made me superior in any way to the people who shared the cab with me, or that becoming an engineer would guarantee absolute immunity against major technological advances, industrial change or economic upheaval. In fact, I don't know of any industry in the world where mastering a particular craft provides that kind of guarantee.

Blacksmith or software designer, truck driver or astro-naut, all have one thing in common: technology and the dynamics of a world economy are constantly changing industry and the labor needed to run it.

I trained for promotion to engineer in 1977 under a UTU agreement, and it was my UTU train service seniority that gave me that opportunity. Although I had to relinquish my train service seniority to enter engine service at that time, I did establish and retain seniority as a fireman under a UTU agreement so that if I became unable to work as an engineer, I could exercise that fireman seniority.

In 1978, UTU secured a rule permitting trainmen to retain and accrue ground seniority while working as an engineer. UTU has always known that the best job protection is a job, and that seniority in only one craft is a fool's bet.

As our industry changed, various crafts were affected in various ways. Clerical workers were replaced en masse by computer technology. Maintenance of track, structures and equipment was reduced by automation and improved engineering design. The result was longer trains and increased productivity, and all railroad operating crafts suffered a shrinking of their ranks and a reduction in their seniority.

UTU constantly worked to preserve as many jobs as possible, and to provide protection for those whose jobs had to be eliminated due to these changes in technology and industry and economics.

Through attrition or reserve boards, and by expanding job opportunities and seniority rights, UTU strove to protect the long-term interests of all crafts in our industry.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE) set a very different course. It took advantage of every opportunity to increase the wages of those fortunate enough to still be working as engineers, but did little to protect those who lost jobs or to prepare for the inevitable day when technology would knock on its own door.

In 1985, UTU provided an opportunity for engineers who did not already have ground service seniority to be added to the appropriate ground service roster. Even then, UTU knew that eventually someone would face the same threat from technology that had ravaged every other craft.

Sadly, some engineers looked that gift horse in the mouth and rejected the offer because of shortsighted advice from BLE leaders who convinced them that refusing train service seniority would somehow ensure the permanency of their position as an engineer.

When the U.S. Congress enacted legislation forcing reductions in train crew sizes in 1991, BLE negotiated a "special pay differential" for engineers directly piggy-backed on UTU agreements. The engineers' additional pay was contingent upon a member of the train crew receiving compensation for operating short-handed under a UTU agreement, and was payable only to engineers who held ground service seniority that would have entitled them to such payment as a trainman.

Those provisions were refined and revised on individual carriers, but if UTU agreements had not permitted engineers to acquire or retain train service seniority in the first place, BLE would have had no basis at all for an argument to increase the engineers' wages due to reductions in train crews.

BLE repeatedly used this "me too" approach to secure significant improvements in wages and working conditions for engineers, yet BLE leaders still rejected any notion that their members' future was inextricably linked to the other operating crafts.

With the introduction of remote control technology, UTU will continue its tradition of striving to represent the interests of all operating crafts. I only hope that the BLE leadership will seriously consider the consequences of attempting to remain an island in the stream of industrial change.

Unfortunately, it appears that they are now looking outside our industry for a new partner. Perhaps that is a viable option. On the other hand, I have always found it rather disconcerting to hear of those "Teamsters" and "Railroad Retirement" mentioned in the same breath.

Yes, I am proud to be a locomotive engineer. I only hope I can still say that after the BLE leadership has made the critical decisions it now faces.

Insurance billing errors not to be ignored

If you are a UTU member covered under the Comprehensive Health Care Benefit (CHCB), the Early Retirement Major Medical Benefits Plan (GA-46000), or you choose to go out of network under the Managed Medical Care Program (MMP), you will have to pay a percentage of each bill, called co-insurance.

UTU members getting treatment from network providers still have to pay co-insurance, but network providers have agreed to discount their charge, so the amount on which co-insurance is figured is lower, saving UTU members money.

The Explanation of Benefits (EOB) that members receive provides them with the co-insurance amount they owe.

Sometimes, however, billing errors occur and members will get a statement from the provider for the difference between the provider's charge as billed and the lower network discount rate allowed, which members should not have to pay. What should the member do?

First, do not ignore the bill. Sooner or later, the member will begin to get billing notices or telephone calls from a collection agency, which may take the member to court to get the payment.

In these situations, members are urged to call the provider's office. Members should remind the provider that they are a UnitedHealthcare, Aetna or Blue Cross/Blue Shield (BCBS) network provider, and that the member is not responsible for the amount greater than the network rate. The member can even send the provider a copy of the EOB (send a copy, not the original. Keep the original with other records.)

Frequently, these problems are simple billing errors, and a call may correct the problem.

If the provider continues to send a bill, members should call their health benefits administrator (UnitedHealthcare, Aetna or BCBS) immediately to report the problem. The benefits administrator will contact the provider, if necessary, to get the records corrected.

The Railroad Plans also have contracted with Coalition America, Inc. (CAI) to obtain discounts from providers who are not part of UnitedHealthcare's, Aetna's or BCBS's provider network. If the discount shown on the EOB is through CAI, there will be a message on the bottom of the EOB telling the member to call CAI if there are any problems. Any billing problems should be handled in the same manner as above, but members should refer to the network name shown in the EOB message when discussing it with the provider's office. If a bill still arrives after a discussion with the provider, contact CAI immediately.

CAI will contact the provider and resolve the billing problem. If the discount was taken incorrectly, CAI will advise the member's health benefits administrator and arrange for the bill to be re-processed correctly. If the discount is correct, CAI will have the provider correct its records to show that the UTU member does not owe an amount greater than the negotiated rate.

Remember that in all of these situations, members will still have to pay their co-insurance part of the bill. Using a network provider or getting a discount through CAI cannot remove that obligation.

More infrequently, UTU members may get a balance-due bill even if they are covered under MMCP and use a network provider. Most of these are simple provider billing errors, and, as explained above, members should call the provider to explain that, under the plan, all they owe is the $15 co-payment (if applicable).

If members cannot get the provider to remove the charge, they should call their health benefits administrator as soon as possible. The benefits administrator will then contact the provider to get the records corrected.

www.utuia.org
www.utu.org
The Alaska Railroad

The Alaska Railroad, owned by the State of Alaska, is a one-of-a-kind carrier, the only North American railroad to provide freight and passenger service. Last year, it transported 821,020 passengers and 7.8 million tons of freight in almost 97,000 carloads over perhaps the most scenic track in the world.

After a failed start by private builders in 1913, following discovery of gold in the Yukon, the federal government took charge in 1914. Congress ordered rail construction equipment and locomotives used to build the Panama Canal sent to Alaska. Finally, President Warren Hardwick signed tapping the symbolic golden spike south of Fairbanks on the west end and a 720-foot bridge spanning the Tanana River. The Alaska Railroad was born. In 1931, ownership was transferred from the federal government to the state.

The railroad consists of 466 miles of mostly single-track, jointed-rail main line, 59 miles of branch lines, 96 miles of yard and 46 siding for more on the 400-mile line linking Anchorage with Fairbanks. The car train sees 52 locomotives and employs 6858 workers. The UTU represents all 156 trains and engine service employees. The railroad's 1.5 accidents per million train miles is well below the national average of 3.8.

The Cargo

Petroleum—notably 850 million gallons a year—is the single most important commodity hauled by the Alaska Railroad. Crude oil from Prudhoe Bay is piped 400 miles south to neat Fairbanks for refining. Several trains of tank cars depart daily to fill the tankers at Tesoro Stevens International Airport in Anchorage, which serves cargo and passengers jets flying the polar routes. Trains also carry jet fuel to lighter jet squadrions at two Air Force bases, Elmendorf and Fairbanks.

In Anchorage, goodbye trains for Fairbanks are assembled from cars that have arrived from Seattle aboard roll-on-roll-off ships. At the railroad's Whittier terminal, barges also arrive from Tacoma with railcars and containers and containers for export are aboard vessels or railways. There are no rail connections with Canada. The Alaska-Canada Highway, which connects the lower 49 states, is a 1,500-mile drive over a 1950s-era roadway.

Specialized shipments, plus heavy and oversized loads such as huge carousel machinery and official medals, are frequently handled by rail. The railroad also hauls large amounts of coal and gravel for construction.

The Passengers

They arrive mostly on warm weather months, mostly by airplane and cruise ship. Modern single-level dome cars with panoramic windows carry them to the national parks or simply on sightseeing tours from sea level through mountain passes accessible only by rail.

Specially trained tour guides team with UTU conductors to provide commentary on points of interest, local history and even legends. The teamwork is exceptional. Orchard Service magazine recently named the Alaska Railroad the “Overall Best” railroad in the world, giving the carrier high ratings for on-board services, safety, equipment, entertainment, uniforms and local food and service.

Even in winter, tourists travel the Alaska Railroad, many of them Japanese headed from Anchorage to tours in Fairbanks. It is thought among many Japanese that children conceived under the Northern Lights—sometimes best seen well north of Anchorage—am better blessed. In Alaska during winter, night stretches for 67 successive days when there is no sun!

By law, the Alaska Railroad must provide flag-stop service used by these living in the wilderness not accessible by roads. Most are aided with telephones or radio in case of emergency. The service is growing in popularity as rural communities take advantage of it.

The Scenery

Alaska Railroad employees never tire of the scenery. “It changes daily,” says Engineer Bill Hightower, who has spent almost 30 years on the Alaska Railroad. Cross frequently comments on observations changing along flat forested terrain to the enormity of the Northern Lights and the bald eagles that live high in trees along the length of any river.

Mountains, valleys, rivers, canyons, cascading waterfalls, tundra, fogs and glaciers from the pristine landscape inhabited by bears, moose, bald eagles, brown bears, mountain sheep and wolves. Just south of Anchorage, Spencer Glacier, a mammoth wall of ice, sits less than a mile from the tracks. The tracks approach Seward, one of the most dramatic rail changes occurs as a six-foot wall of water rushes in at high tide and sometimes carries Beluga whales with it into the channel.

When snow is deep, moose congregate on the cleared tracks where they can run faster from predators. To moose, locomotives are huge predators. Sensing the locomotive might follow them into the marshy terrain, some will stop in their tracks, eventually ambling away. Sometimes, however, trains can’t stop in time.

One union, indivisible

With one union—the UTU—representing all train and engine service employees, rivalries are virtually unknown on the Alaska Railroad.

“The union is a true friend,” says Jerry Valinske, president of UTU Local 1626 in Anchorage. “It’s a true friend, a union that cares about its members.”

General Chairman Wes Rogers cites another reason for no rivalry: “We’ve maintained an esprit de corps for everyone.”

In fact, with train and engine service employees all pulling together under the UTU banner, the UTU has negotiated one of the premier transportation contracts in North America. “In 2005, every member of the union will be guaranteed a minimum of $30,000 annually. ‘There is strength in union and especially in a single operating union,’” says Wes Rogers.

Climactic Gore Range towers six-feet above alpine frost so they can be connected.

Conductor Brian Hightower watches 67 years service, frequently monitors engines, as he is doing here from the left side of the cab. Even after retirement Hightower said he wouldn’t consider transferring Alaska—even as a union.

Conductor John Parning, on the heavy boards of a car, controls the diesel engine. Many consumer goods arriving in Alaska are containerized. The train also hawks much heavy equipment with lives of explosions, carborundum and jet pipes.

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The single largest risk factor for developing glaucoma is having a family member with the disease. As of this year, Medicare covers the cost of a baseline eye exam for Medicare beneficiaries who are at high risk for glaucoma.

In the past, Medicare paid for routine testing for glaucoma only after a patient was identified as having symptoms of the disease, but early detection and treatment made before there are noticeable symptoms can be critical to helping people keep their eyesight. CMSM said.

The Glaucoma Research Foundation reports that blindness due to glaucoma costs the U.S. government more than $1.5 billion annually in Social Security benefits, lost income tax revenues and health care expenditures. A glaucoma screening costs Medicare just $35.

Medicare covers 80 percent of the approved amount for glaucoma screening, after a person has met the $10 deductible, CMSM said.

Retired field supervisor R.J. Davidson dies


Brother Davidson was a member of the UTU-IAS’s Million Dollar Round Table from 1974 to 1980.

Davidson began his rail career in 1940 as a brakeman on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Joined the former Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, and was promoted to conductor in 1942.

He was inducted into the Army in November 1944, he served two years in Japan, and upon discharge returned to the railroad.

He was elected local president and became Pennsylvania assistant field supervisor in 1950.

Six months later, he took a temporary assignment in Oregon, and his success led to an offer to take the position of field supervisor for Oregon, Washington and the western half of Montana, a position he held until retiring in 1984.

He is survived by his wife, Ann, six children, a sister, 15 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

All rail retirees invited to St. Petersburg picnic

Retired railroaders from all crafts are invited to join the fun at St. Petersburg, Fla., at the annual picnic begun in 1991 by Indianapolis-based New York Central and Conrail retirees, said UTU Retiree Program member Joe Alenduff of Local 1963, Louisville, Ky.

This year’s Retired Railroaders’ Picnic will be held March 15 in St. Petersburg’s Ft. DeSota Park. Alenduff said participants should bring their own place settings and a dish or two to share.

Lunch, hot dogs, coffee and tea will be furnished by the organizers.

For more information, call Alenduff at (727) 522-8808, or send e-mail to joe.par@verizon.net.
**Will the proposed tax cut boost the economy?**

**John E. Thompson**
L-1526, Michigan City, Ind.

“I started railroading in 1992. I’m an assistant general chairperson and an engineer on the Northeast Indiana Commuter Transportation District. A tax cut won’t boost the economy at all. It didn’t last time. My wife and I got $600 last year. It’s not really a large amount and won’t inject a lot into the economy. President Bush thinks I’ll go buy a new washer or dryer, but I won’t. I’m trying to save a little more, because it seems the economy is only going to get worse. We’re not going to make big purchases now. I think Bush is trying to sway public opinion and keep our minds off the real issues, with Iraq on one side and North Korea on the other.”

**Yardmasters ratify pact with NJ Transit**

CLEVELAND – Members of the UTU’s Yardmaster Department employed on New Jersey Transit have unanimously ratified a new agreement with the carrier.

The three-year contract provides for a 10% pay increase without work-rule changes and continues full payment by the carrier of health care premiums, among other improvements.

“Determination and persistence yields benefits for the membership,” said Donald R. Carver, assistant to the president of the UTU and director of the union’s Yardmaster Department.

“New Jersey Transit General Chairperson John Eischman and local chairperson Kevin Keams are to be commended for their hard work and dedication in negotiating this agreement,” Carver said.

“This is another of many examples of how a progressive UTU negotiates favorable agreements for its members,” said UTU International President Byron A. Boyd Jr.

UTU-represented yardmasters also recently ratified agreements with the Grand Trunk Western and CSX.

Additionally, Yardmaster Department representatives are negotiating new agreements on behalf of yardmasters employed by Amtrak, Chicago Metra, Indiana Harbor Belt and Soo Line.

Also, the UTU’s Yardmaster Department, which represents mechanical supervisors on Conrail Shared Assets, is negotiating a new agreement with that entity, which is jointly owned by CSX and Norfolk Southern.

Mechanical supervisors there are represented by Yardmaster General Chairperson Ron Kratz.

“This will be the supervisors’ first contract since joining forces with the UTU,” Carver said. “We expect to meet with the carrier in March to continue negotiations.”

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Continued from page 1

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Also, UTU National Legislative Director James Boyd met with Federal Railroad Administrator and review every issue or component that may

be done, and done quickly.”

The conservatives agreed to support the measure because of tens of thousands of tele-

phone calls coming into their offices – many of them from UTU members, UTU retirees, UTU

families and UTU-member friends. “ Brunken-

hoefer said. UTU International President Byron A. Boyd Jr. said that “trip rates do more than end the dual

basis of pay. They simplify pay by rolling arbi-

traries into the trip rates. That eliminates dis-

putes over arbitrations that have led to so many grievances. Trip rates also allow rail employees to collect the money they have earned without a lot of complications.

“Moreover, trip rates will provide predictable paychecks, end forever carrier attempts to elimi-

nate arbitraries and end forever carrier attempts to increase the basic day,” Boyd said.


Trip rates

Continued from page 1

sing straightaway, long or short turnaround trips and deadheads. Each trip rate includes compensa-

tion for arbitrary payments such as initial and/or final terminal delay or terminal switching that were actually paid to pre-1985 employees in the test period, Kerley said.

“This means our post-1985 members will now receive that compensation, along with a signifi-
cant increase in compensation for deadheading, since they will now receive the same trip rate as pre-1985 employees. Overtime on these runs will be based on the actual miles run, plus an over-
time extender reflecting those included arbitrary payments that would have previously nullified any overtime,” Kerley said.

“The parties also agreed to continue investigat-
ing the relationship between the overtime threshold and those included arbitrary payments, with the aim of identifying a formula that will eliminate the need to roll out any frozen ele-

ments before applying future wage increases,” Kerley said.

UTU efforts help Amtrak win federal funding

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Thanks to the com-
bined efforts of concerned UTU members and friends, Congress voted last month to give Amtrak $1.05 billion in subsidies for the fiscal year that runs through Sept. 30.

Amtrak said that it could maintain all of its services this year even though Congress gave it $150 million less than the railroad said it needed.

“The amount appropriated by Congress only rein-
forses that sustaining Amtrak operations will be an ongoing challenge,” the railroad said in a statement. “Though the budget will be extremely tight, this funding level should be suf-

ficient to operate the national system for the remainder of the fiscal year.”

After Congress reluctantly agreed to support this funding level for Amtrak and it is a victory for supporters of Amtrak and UTU members whose jobs are dependent upon a national security rail passenger network,” said UTU National Legislative Director James Brunkenhoefer.

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UTU for Life

Continued from page 1

transit industries deserve the opportunity to stay in touch, swap stories, receive information on health care, retirement benefits and legal issues and be part of UTU’s legislative program,” said UTU International President Byron A. Boyd Jr.

“Wherever UTU retirees live, there is opportu-
nity for a UTU for Life chapter and UTU will assist in its organization,” Boyd said.

The first UTU for Life chapter is being formed in the Seattle/Tacoma area. Retiree Jim Shelley of Seattle is coordinating the chapter’s forma-

tion. Local officers will be elected and its mem-

bers will determine the frequency and location of

lunch, dinner and other get-togethers. Spouses will be invited to participate. “We may soon see separate chapters in several areas of Washington State,” Shelley said. “It will be up to

retirees.”

A second chapter is being formed in eastern Pennsylvania/southern New Jer-

sey with coordination by UTU retiree George Koval. Letters will be mailed to prospective members in April.

Members of these two chapters and their spouses will be invited to partici-

pate in the UTU Regional Meetings sched-

uled for Seattle and Philadelphia later this year. Members of UTU for Life chapters will receive commemorative caps with the UTU for Life logo.

UTU retirees are among our most effective members in influencing lawmakers on issues of Railroad Retirement, Medicare and Amtrak,”

Boyd said. “UTU for Life is an additional opportunity for retirees to remain con-

nected and have their collective voic-

es heard on issues before Congress and state legislatures.”

UTU retirees interested in forming chapters in their areas should send a note to: UTU for Life, United Trans-

portation Union, 14602 Detroit Ave., Cleve-

land, OH 44107.

“UTU for Life is a way for retirees to stay in touch and stay focused – to care and share,” Boyd said.

Members die

Continued from page 1

all involved – rail management, labor and feder-

al regulators – as the tragedy it is and used as a

learning experience to prevent a recurrence.

“That is why I have called this safety meet-

ing,” Boyd said. “When four dedicated, career

railroaders die in separate accidents in a single week, it is evidence to me that we have to do more than we are doing. Informal labor/manager-

age/government efforts, such as the Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) working group, are beneficial. But, obviously, more must be done, and done quickly.”

Boyd stressed that the parties “must sit down and review every issue or component that may have led to these incidents, including fatigue, weather, equipment and other conditions.”

Following two of the fatalities last month, Boyd met with Federal Railroad Administrator Allan Rutter to discuss rail safety regulation. Also, UTU National Legislative Director James Brunkenhoefer met with Cong. Corrine Brown (D-Fla.), the new ranking Democrat on the House Railroad Subcommittee. UTU safety Brunkenhoefer also planned to speak with Rail Subcommittee Chairman Cong. Jack Quinn (R-

N.Y.), in whose Buffalo district one of the fatali-

ties occurred.

“This safety issue extends across the entire industry and is not confined to one railroad,” Boyd said. He warned “all involved that inatten-

tion to employee safety will not be tolerated and much more drastic steps may be called for if im-

mediate remedies are not forthcoming.

“I warn those who may attempt to politicize this issue in order to promote their own agenda that now is not the time for political games,” Boyd said. “Now is the time for all to come together to ensure the safety of railroad employees.”

As senior UTU officials plan for the safety meeting with carriers, Boyd asked that every UTU member take a moment to remind them-

selves of the five lifesaving tips developed by the SOFA working group: 1) Secure equipment before action is taken; 2) Protect against mov-

ing equipment; 3) Remain alert at the begin-

ning of the job and when the work changes; 4) Communicate before action is taken; 5) Coach less experienced employees to perform service safely.

Here are the four tragic deaths and serious injury:

Brother Timothy E. Kelley, 57, a member of UTU Local 1075, was killed in a switching acci-

dent on Canadian National/Illinois Central near

Flatrock, Mich., Feb. 11. He was found on the ground, apparently struck by a railcar. He is sur-

vived by his wife Marilee, six children and four grandchildren.

Brother Steven D. Thomas, 38, a member of UTU Local 934, was killed in a train collision on BNSF near Bluff, Neb., on Feb. 13. He jumped from a coal train that was about to strike a switch engine and was buried under more than 2,000 tons of coal after the collision. He is sur-

vived by a wife and two small children.

Brother John W. Snedden, 36, a member of UTU Local 292, was killed in a switching acci-

dent on CSX near Syracuse, N.Y., Feb. 16. He was struck by a moving boxcar and died from a blunt-force injury. He is survived by his wife and a four-year-old son.

Brother Patrick Armstrong, 50, a member of UTU Local 1193, was crushed to death in a

switching accident on CSX in Buffalo, N.Y., Feb. 18. He became pinned between two boxcars and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Conductor Shane White, 21, a member of Local 1598 in Manchester, Ga., in late January was riding a boxcar when he realized it was about to collide with another. He jumped but was caught underneath and lost both legs, the right leg above the knee and the left leg close to the hip.
The upcoming UTU/UTUIA Regional Meetings are guaranteed to provide plenty of fraternalism, education and fun.

Each Regional Meeting lasts a full three days, with the President's Banquet on the evening of the third day.

The Seattle Regional Meeting has been designating the joint U.S./Canadian Regional Meeting.

All those attending must be registered in order to attend any planned function. Children age 11 and under who are pre-registered are complimentary. The registration form is printed on the right.

A completed registration form listing each attendee, regardless of age, and complete payment in U.S. funds must be received at the UTU International Headquarters, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107, 30 days prior to the scheduled start of the meetings or the registrant will be charged an on-site registration fee of $175.

The pre-registration fee for the 2003 Regional Meetings is $125 per member, spouse or child over 11. You must make your own room reservations at one of the hotels listed below, and certain deadlines apply. One-day registrations also are being allowed for those who would like to attend the Regional Meetings but can't spare the time away from work or family. One-day registrations are $60.

You may cancel your Regional Meeting registration 10 days prior to the first day of the meeting or the golf outing without penalty. Please fax any cancellation at least 10 days prior to the first day of the meeting or the golf outing without penalty. Please fax any cancellation immediately to the UTU International Headquarters at (216) 228-5735.

Registering before the Regional Meetings speeds sign-in procedures at the meeting site, helps organizers plan more accurately, and saves on meeting costs. These savings will be passed on to each pre-registered attendee. Each person attending the Regional Meeting, including family members and guests, MUST be registered in order to attend any planned event. Registration fees are $125 per person; children 11 years of age and under are complimentary. On-site registration will be $175 per person. All fees must be paid in U.S. funds. Canadian funds will be returned, possibly delaying your registration. If you have questions, consult your bank. Registration forms must be received 30 days prior to the start of the Regional Meeting.

Lots of fun

In Seattle, there will be a night out at Safeco Field to watch the Seattle Mariners face the Montreal Expos. This will be held on Tuesday, June 10. A pre-game tailgate party inside the stadium will include food and beverages for any registered Regional Meeting attendee.

On Wednesday, June 11, there will be a special tour of Seattle with lunch and transportation provided. The tour will start at 9 a.m., with bus transportation from the host hotel to downtown Seattle, which is one of the nation's newest and most vibrant downtown shopping areas. The tour also will visit the waterfront, the International District and other locations. Buses will return to the host hotel about 3:30 p.m.

Additionally, shuttle buses will run daily from the host hotel to downtown Seattle.

The afternoon tour and evening out in Philadelphia will be announced in the next issue of the UTU News.

All persons planning on taking these tours must pre-register (either online or on the registration form at right), and space is limited.

Golf outings set

The UTU will hold golf outings at 8 a.m. the day before the start of the two Regional Meetings. The dates are Sunday, June 8, in Seattle and Sunday, Aug. 24, in Philadelphia.

In Seattle, golfers will play at the High Cedars Golf Club in Otting, Wash., at the base of Mt. Rainer. In Philadelphia, golfers will enjoy playing Ron Jaworski’s Valley Brook Golf Club in Blackwood, N.J.

The fee, $80 per golfer, includes transportation from the host hotel, greens fees, a golf cart for every two players, lunch and much more. Register for the golf outings in the space provided on the registration form printed on this page. Be sure to include your golf fee with your registration fee and your true handicap. There is a limit of 144 golfers per outing.

Register now for the Regional Meetings!

Online registration available at <www.utu.org>. Click on “Meetings.”

June 9-11, 2003, Western Regional Meeting

DoubleTree Hotel, Seattle Airport

18740 Pacific Hwy. S., Seattle, WA 98188

Hotel reservations: (800) 222-8733 or (206) 246-8600

Reservation code: UTU; Room rate: $129 single/double; $139 triple; $149 quad

Pricing: Self; $12/day

August 25-27, 2003, Eastern Regional Meeting

Wyndham Philadelphia at Franklin Plaza

17th and Race Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19103

Hotel reservations: (800) WYNDHAM or (215) 448-2000

Reservation code: UTU; Room rate: $99 single/double/triple/quad

Pricing: Self; $13/day

UTU Regional Meeting Registration Form

Registering before the Regional Meetings speeds sign-in procedures at the meeting site, helps organizers plan more accurately, and saves on meeting costs. These savings will be passed on to each pre-registered attendee. Each person attending the Regional Meeting, including family members and guests, MUST be registered in order to attend any planned event. Registration fees are $125 per person; children 11 years of age and under are complimentary. On-site registration will be $175 per person. All fees must be paid in U.S. funds. Canadian funds will be returned, possibly delaying your registration. If you have questions, consult your bank. Registration forms must be received 30 days prior to the start of the Regional Meeting.

Which Regional Meeting will you be attending?

[ ] Seattle  [ ] Philadelphia

Member Registration

Name _______________________________ Local ______ Title (if any) ______

Home address ___________________________ City/State/ZIP ______

Daytime phone number ( ) ______

Spouse Registration  [ ] Seattle  [ ] Philadelphia

Spouse name ___________________________ Title (if any) ______

Will spouse/children attend the UTU tours?  [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] How many?

Child Registration  [ ] Seattle  [ ] Philadelphia

Child name ________________ Age ______ Child name ________________ Age ______

Child name ________________ Age ______ Child name ________________ Age ______

Guest Registration  [ ] Seattle  [ ] Philadelphia

Guest Name ___________________________ Relationship to Member ______

Guest address ___________________________ City/State/ZIP ______

Golf Registration  [ ] Seattle  [ ] Philadelphia

Name _______________________________ Handicap ______ Name ________________ Handicap ______

Name _______________________________ Handicap ______ Name ________________ Handicap ______

Golf fees are $80 per golfer (include in total payment)

Payment Options

Check/Money Order (U.S. funds only) $ ______

Credit Card (please indicate type)  [ ] VISA  [ ] MasterCard

Card number ______ Expiration date ______ Total charged $ ______

Signature ____________________________

Should additional space be needed, make copies of this form and attach to the original. This form and payment of $125 per person over the age of 11, plus golf registration fees of $80 per golfer (if applicable), must be received at the UTU International Headquarters, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250, 30 days prior to the Regional Meeting. Make checks or money orders payable in U.S. funds to UTU Regional Meeting. Those who do not pre-register for the Regional Meeting but instead choose to register at the meeting site will be charged a $50 penalty fee.
Spring is in the Air!

Enjoy the New Season with One Less Worry.
Contact UTUIA.

Almost everybody has a mortgage, car payments, credit card bills and family financial obligations.

These bills keep arriving even if you are not able to work because of injury or illness or even death.

There is a need to provide an income for yourself, your spouse and other family members who depend upon you for financial support should misfortune strike you down.

We can solve your problems by tailoring our Ultimate Par, Ultimate Term or Disability Income products to provide you with financial peace of mind...and one less worry!

Give us a call at 1-800-558-8842 or complete and return the coupon below to receive more information.

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