

U.S. RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD

GUIDE TO  
FREEDOM OF  
INFORMATION ACT  
(FOIA) REQUESTS



# Background

This guide is designed to assist you in requesting records from the United States Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). The RRB is a federal agency charged with the administration of the Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts. In general, the Railroad Retirement Act replaces the Social Security Act for employment in the railroad industry. Similarly, the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act replaces state unemployment acts for work in the railroad industry. The RRB is headquartered at 844 North Rush Street in Chicago, Illinois 60611-2092. All written requests for records should be directed to this address unless otherwise noted in this guide.

Information available from the RRB under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) includes the agency's procedure manuals, final decisions of the three-member Board which heads the agency, rulings of the Board and legal opinions.

Because the RRB administers a comprehensive program of railroad retirement, unemployment, and sickness benefits for railroad workers, it also maintains information about individuals which may not be disclosed in response to a FOIA request. The Railroad Retirement Act, the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act, and the Privacy Act restrict the disclosure of information about individuals. If you request information about an individual, you must, as a general rule, provide the RRB a written authorization signed by the individual who is the subject of that record.

This guide explains how you can get information from the RRB about the various kinds of records the agency keeps.

# Records We Make Available Under the FOIA

## 1. FOIA Reading Room

The RRB has established a reading room at its headquarters office. The reading room offers access to copies of the agency's procedure manuals, final decisions of the three-member Board which heads the agency ("the Board"), rulings of the Board and legal opinions. Some of these documents may also be available at the various district and regional offices of the RRB.

2. General information about the RRB is available on the World Wide Web. The Internet address of Railroad Retirement Board Online is:

[www.rrb.gov](http://www.rrb.gov)

3. You can also find information about RRB records under the Government Printing Office's (GPO) Government Information Locator System (GILS). GILS contains an inventory of the RRB's automated information systems, its Privacy Act systems of records, and how information is dispersed to other government agencies. The RRB's GILS site is located at:

[www.usgs.gov/gils/](http://www.usgs.gov/gils/)

4. The RRB has issued regulations in 20 CFR 200.4 regarding its compliance with the FOIA. In addition, the RRB issues an annual report under the FOIA. Copies of the regulations and/or annual report may be obtained by writing to the Deputy General Counsel.

# Making a FOIA Request

A FOIA request must be made in writing and cannot be made electronically through the Internet. It is easy to make a written FOIA request by mail. No form is needed. Mark both the envelope and its contents: “FREE-DOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST” or “INFORMATION REQUEST.” Address your request to:

Deputy General Counsel  
Railroad Retirement Board  
844 North Rush Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60611-2092

If you want to request a record which we do not publish or which we do not make available in one of our offices, give us a detailed description of the record(s) you want. You should give us as many details as you can, such as names, dates, subject matter and location. A vague description could delay our answer or prevent us from finding the records you want. We will ask you to revise your request if we need information to find the record(s). You should include a daytime telephone number where you can be reached in case we have questions about your request.

## Records We Generally Cannot Disclose

The FOIA does not require agencies to disclose all records. Some examples of records we may not disclose are:

- internal personnel rules.
- records that are confidential by law,
- trade secrets or confidential financial information,
- personal information about living people, or
- records of investigations.

## Fees and Payments

You may be required to pay a fee for the time we spend searching, reviewing, and copying records. We may charge a fee even if we are unable to locate or disclose any information or if we no longer have the record. The FOIA fee schedule has different provisions for different types of requesters. We will tell you what we will charge after looking at your request.

## How We Process Your Request

We will process your request expeditiously and advise you of our decision. If a request for information under the FOIA is denied, we will explain the reasons for the denial. The requestor may appeal the denial to the three-member Railroad Retirement Board by sending a written appeal to the Secretary to the Board. A copy of the denial should accompany the appeal. The Board will respond to the appeal within 20 business days. A denial by the Board may be appealed to the United States District Court.

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