

Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen

Railroading has always been an extremely dangerous occupation. In the late 1800s, almost one-third of brakemen were maimed or killed each year and an estimated 70 percent of all train crew members could expect to be crippled within five working years. Wages were extremely low, the equivalent of one dollar a day, pay raises were infrequent, and there were no seniority rights and no limits on the number of working hours. Despite threats of job loss and blacklisting, railroaders began to form fraternal associations to provide otherwise unobtainable health, injury and death insurance for the families of railroaders. On January 1, 1969, the United Transportation Union came into being, when four brotherhoods - the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, the Order of Railway Conductors and Brakemen, and the Switchmen's Union of North America - united to more effectively represent their joint interests. Today, UTU members come from more than 20 railroad and bus transportation occupations, and belong to more than 800 locals throughout the United States and Canada.