



Railroad Workers United

Solidarity • Unity • Democracy

The Rank & File in Action!

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The Union Pacific Railroad and other rail carriers don't care about the health interests of railroad workers. Their vaccine mandate has nothing to do with fighting COVID.

While Railroad Workers United denounces corporate vaccine mandates, we acknowledge the need for worker solidarity, including vaccines, for our collective health and safety.

Railroad employers have long disregarded the health and safety of their workers and the public. In May of 2020, near the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Railroad Workers United passed a resolution calling for the rail carriers to take the necessary steps to protect their workers. These steps included temperature testing for employees in the workplace, making available masks and sanitizer, limiting the number of crews to be transported in a vehicle, and full pay and benefits for employees required to quarantine due to exposure or illness. The railroads refused or were slow to implement these protections, choosing instead a business-as-usual approach which put workers at risk. On top of their refusal to implement needed COVID-19 protections, railroads simultaneously furloughed and laid off workers, while using potential COVID-related workforce shortages to capitalize on the crisis by demanding and receiving rollbacks to numerous longstanding Federal regulations regarding safe railroad operations. The predictable result of this neglect by the major rail carriers led to the illness and death of many railroad workers. While naming us "essential," railroads continued to make billions in profits at the expense of worker health and safety, and employment.

We know railroad carriers do not operate in the interest of workers or the public. They had ample opportunity throughout the pandemic to bargain with the unions to implement measures to protect workers from COVID-19. Because of their history of disregarding safety, we should all question the motives of companies instituting vaccine mandates which extend beyond the boundaries of the Federal Executive Order. Rail carriers can't be trusted on anything related to health and safety — instead, it requires us as union members and workers to fight for these protections.

This is the time for our humanity and our basic solidarity with our own co-workers to come to the fore. In the US, over three-quarters of a million people have died due to COVID-19. Deaths only tell a partial story. The truly devastating issue for railroaders and all working people will be moving forward with the long-term impacts to people's lives and their health. This impact will change everything, including our healthcare costs for the next generation.

Finally, we call on the railroad unions to fight for worker health and safety, and move away from any and all support for so-called "behavior based safety." As workers, we must not make personal decisions which negatively impact the safety of our fellow workers. Rather, our unions must bargain to implement the best on-property agreements we can for our collective interests. Our unions must be front and center, fighting to ensure that the rail carriers provide a safe workplace for their employees and the public.

Adopted by the RWU Steering Committee 11/16/2021