

# The Importance of Filing Claims

As a union worker, you and your co-workers work under a contract, a signed agreement, penned by both your union leadership and the management of the carrier for which you work. You should have ready access to copies of all applicable agreements to refer to when you have a question or believe that you are being denied your rights under the contract.

In many cases, the employer fails to live up to and abide by the agreement. When this happens, it is up to each and every union member to file a claim for what is duly owed to you. Many times you will hear your co-workers say things like, “They will never pay you anyway”, or “I don’t have the time for that.” But it is imperative that we all take responsibility to hold the company’s feet to the fire. It is not just a personal choice – each time any one of us allows the company to willfully violate the contract and get away with it, we weaken our collective rights and our strength, and embolden the carrier to even further violate our agreements.

By reading over and studying your union contract you will have a much better sense of what you are entitled to, what your rights are, and how to play a role as a good member of the union, one who cares about yourself, your brothers and sisters, and your collective conditions of employment. Take the time to file claims when it appears that you have a case. It is one of your fundamental rights as a union member to do so. And seek help from more experienced union members. Talk to your local chairman and vice local chairs when you have questions as to the proper wording of the claim.

On many crew districts, there are a dozen or so common claims that you and your co-workers will regularly fill out. Learn what the most common claims are and how to properly word them and file them in a timely fashion. There can be others too, based upon rarely occurring company violations and based on more obscure language of the contract. Some of these, while not often seen, can be good claims with merit as well and may be paid as well. You will never know if you don’t file them!

In conclusion, read your agreements, have them readily available while at work, discuss the contract and violations with your co-workers, ask for advice and assistance from your co-workers, and file, file, file!!!!