

What makes a good rank-and-file member?

First and foremost meeting attendance is essential whenever possible. You must be involved and educated on issues affecting your job. This is accomplished by constant contract education, reporting contract and safety violations and contacting local, state, and federal lawmakers when necessary.

Know local, state, and federal lawmaker's numbers and have these numbers in your possession (i.e. cell phone or PDA phone book.) Call them with any legislative alerts which you receive from local, state, or national BLET legislative representatives.

It is essential that all members are registered voters, and exercise their right to vote.

Foster a spirit of brotherhood within your local Division and work location whenever possible. There can be several Divisions in a work location or Hub. We must work together on common issues.

Read and have a basic understanding of your BLET constitution and by-laws.

Know how to properly turn in a time claim account violation of the agreement and what documentation is necessary to support the claim. As we are under the Railway Labor Act this is how we protect our agreements. In this day and age documentation is essential. In contract cases the burden of proof is on the organization. If you can't document the issue it will be viewed in arbitration that the event did not happen.

The railroad company understands money. If we get in their pockets deep enough changes will be made to correct the problem issues.

Know the safety hotline numbers for company, and service unit. Call-in unsafe conditions and also report these issues to your Division Officers.

Know the proper ways for a rank-and-file member to advance a grievance up the chain of command within the local and general committees.

Ways to get the most out of a Union Meeting

- Pay attention to all issues on the agenda at a meeting
- Do not be afraid to weigh-in with your thoughts and opinions on said issues. Ask questions if you don't understand the issue.
- Take notes during the meeting.
- When on the job, it is a good idea to keep a notebook available for writing down any issue which you want to discuss or any questions you have. This will help you to remember the question or issue to present at the next meeting when you are given an opportunity to speak.
- Be familiar with Robert's Rules of Order so you understand how the meeting is run and how to properly participate.
- Do not be afraid to voice your opinion, even if you don't agree or vote in the minority. Your opinion and/or vote is just as important as any other member's.
- Keep track of issues or questions for which a Division Officer does not readily have an answer or says he will get back to you. Make sure the answer is provided for you in a timely manner.
- Pass on information gained at the meeting to other union brothers and sisters who may not have been able to attend the meeting. Try to keep fellow union members up-to-date and informed on the issues facing the local.
- Work with Division Officers in spreading the word concerning meeting dates and times by using all communication devices available (posters, e-mail, text messaging, etc.)