

# The Fund Office Report

JULY 2005

## STEAMFITTERS

### HEALTH REIMBURSEMENT ACCOUNT COMMENCED JULY 1ST NEW FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND HOUSING BENEFIT IN FULL SWING

The first reimbursement checks in the newest addition to your employee benefit programs, the Health Reimbursement Account (HRA), rolled off the presses right after the Independence Day holiday. The HRA can reimburse you for all post January 1, 2005 medical care and associated expenses not covered by insurance on a tax-free basis. The Account will be funded by \$1.00 per journeyman hour (pro-rated for apprentices) . If your benefit application is larger than your HRA balance funds from your Security Benefit Fund account can be transferred in to take advantage of the tax-free reimbursement.

HRA Benefit applications, pink in color, are available in the Fund Office, Union Office , through the Fund Office website [[www.steamfitters.com](http://www.steamfitters.com)] or by mail by calling the Help Desk at 212.465.8888, Ext. 244. Since the applications are new please read them carefully and follow the instructions closely. The HRA will be an excellent addition to your benefit programs.

July 1st also brought with it the two newest benefits under the Security Benefit Fund- - - the Financial Assistance Benefit and the Acquisition or Retention of a Residence or Rental Unit Benefit, commonly referred to as the "Housing" Benefit.

The Financial Assistance Benefit will reimburse you, subject to your account balance, for an unpaid home mortgage, co-op or condominium mortgage and/or maintenance fees, rent or property taxes for any month that you were unable to work and are receiving for the same month, Unemployment Benefits, Disability Benefits or Workers Compensation benefits. Only claims for periods on or after July 1, 2005 are eligible for this benefit.

The "Housing" Benefit can be used for certain costs associated with the purchase of a new residence, initial rental costs, or to prevent eviction or foreclosure. In all cases, this benefit is only allowed to be used for your primary residence, which must be located with a reasonable commuting distance from the Local 638 jurisdiction. In addition, since this benefit can not be used for post-retirement purposes, retired participants are excluded from this benefit at present.

Both the Financial Assistance and Housing Benefits have more detailed explanations which you must read and which were contained in the April 2005 Notice mailed to all participants and which can be found on the Fund Office website [see the bottom of the Forms section under Summary of Material Modifications]. Applications for both new benefits are available in the same manner as stated above for the HRA.

As always, don't hesitate to contact the Fund Office with any questions or comments about these new benefits or any other of your various benefit programs.

**Metal Trades & Steamfitters**

**MEDCO ISSUES NEW PRESCRIPTION DRUG ID CARDS FOR ONLY MEMBERS  
RESIDING IN CONNECTICUT AND CALIFORNIA**

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**NEW ID CARDS FOR ALL MEMBERS TO BE ISSUED LATER IN 2005**

Earlier this year state legislatures in Connecticut and California passed privacy laws requiring the non-use of Social Security numbers on healthcare ID cards as of July 1, 2005 . Therefore, all active or retired participants residing in those states recently received new ID cards with unique ID numbers. In addition, similar laws have been passed in Arizona, Illinois, Michigan and Texas requiring non-SSN on ID cards as of January 1, 2006.

Therefore, in order to facilitate these various state laws, anticipating additional state mandates and to further protect your privacy Medco will be re-issuing ID cards which will utilize random ID numbers to all participants in the latter part of this year. If you recall Empire BlueCross BlueShield has already taken similar action as the Empire ID card you possess does not have your SSN on it.

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**REVISED APPLICATIONS FOR VISION CARE & HEARING AID BENEFITS AVAILABLE**

Although the annual reimbursements from the Welfare Fund for the Vision Care and Hearing Aid benefit have not changed (\$300 and \$400 respectively), the benefit application has. In order to accommodate paying you any balance over the aforementioned amounts from the Health Reimbursement Account on a tax-free basis the application had to be adapted.

Do not use any old Vision or Hearing applications you may have stock piled. New applications are available through the Fund Office (visit or telephone), Union Office or the

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**WE NEED YOUR HELP!!**

It is estimated that nationally upwards of 15% of all medical and hospital claim dollars are paid erroneously through intentional fraud or processing errors. In our situation, Empire BlueCross BlueShield has excellent fraud and auditing divisions and has won awards for their loss prevention efforts. The Fund Office has an extensive auditing department which works with our healthcare companies to reduce problems. However, some small percentage of our Welfare Fund's claims are inappropriately paid.

That's where we need your help. Please review the Explanation of Benefits you receive from Empire or MetLife (we audit dental, too!) very carefully. If something doesn't look right, do not hesitate to contact Empire or MetLife directly or call the Fund Office. Every single dollar we save is another dollar in our Welfare Fund to pay benefits with. By all of us doing our part we will ensure the highest level of compliance.