

The Fund Office Report

JULY 2004

EMPIRE BLUECROSS BLUESHIELD TO ISSUE NEW ID CARDS AS SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS WILL NO LONGER BE USED

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METAL TRADES MEMBERS TO GET CARDS IN LATE SUMMER 2004;
STEAMFITTERS IN MARCH 2005

We have all read in newspapers or seen on television stories about people having their identities stolen by criminals. Usually those stories include horrific accounts of people having bank accounts cleaned out and credit cards misused. Often times, police authorities state, the stolen identity process starts with a criminal securing a person's Social Security Number (SSN) from an ID card of some type.

Based on this problem a number of states have passed laws which prevent insurance companies, credit card institutions and other entities from displaying SSNs on business records including ID cards. A similar law had been introduced in New York State and there is federal legislation being considered also. More recently, the United Association removed SSNs from your union ID cards.

Earlier this year, Empire BlueCross BlueShield began systematically replacing subscriber's ID cards, eliminating the use of SSNs and employing a randomly determined ID Number. With the renewal of each group contract, Empire is issuing new ID cards and will do so for both the Steamfitter and Metal Trades groups.

The Metal Trade members will receive new ID cards in September as their Welfare Fund just renewed a contract with Empire as of July 1st. The Steamfitter members will receive new ID cards in March 2005 as the new contract period with their Welfare Fund commences on January 1, 2005. An explanatory notice will be included with each new ID card you receive.

If there are any questions regarding this matter or any other aspect of your employee benefit programs do not hesitate to contact the Fund Office at 212.465.8888. We have a dedicated Help Desk set up to answer your inquiries @ Ext. 244.

Keep Those Census Cards Coming.....!!!!

We keep repeating ourselves and we have been shouting enough to be "blue in the face", but we cannot emphasize enough your need and responsibility to keep your census information for health coverage up-to-date. A new birth, an adoption, a marriage, a death or a divorce need to be reported to the Fund Office immediately. Hesitation will effect the timing involved to add a dependent for coverage. Correspondingly, any delay in notifying the Fund Office relative to a death or divorce will cost the Welfare Fund unnecessarily and ultimately you will be personally liable for any costs the Welfare Fund should not have paid.

**REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION TO INVADE NEW YORK CITY
Area Around Madison Square Garden To Be Tightly Secured**

The Republican National Convention will be held between August 30th and September 3rd in Madison Square Garden. The security that has been planned in a post-9/11 world is unparalleled in size and scope.

Federal law enforcement agencies and the NYC Police Department have established a restricted perimeter area around Madison Square Garden which includes the 5 Penn Plaza building that the Fund Office is located in. We have been informed that access that week to the Fund Office will be restricted to Fund Office employees only. Members will not be able to visit the Fund Office that week under any circumstances. It is anticipated at this time that the office will remain open (subject to the future advice of Homeland Security agencies and the NYPD) to accept your mail, telephone calls and email.

Business should return to normal on Tuesday, September 7th, the day after Labor Day. Watch the Fund Office website for any future announcements.

Metal Trades and Steamfitters

NEW PAYMENT SCHEDULES FOR ORTHODONTIA

MetLife has informed the Welfare Funds that effective as of January 1, 2005 repetitive orthodontia payments for the appliance adjustment visits will be paid at the end of a quarter, a quarter representing a three-month period not necessarily a calendar quarter. In other words, if the adjustment visits are for the three month period of February-March-April, the orthodontist will be reimbursed in April. The current payment schedule is monthly.

This new payment schedule does not effect the total benefit to which you are entitled, just the timing of when those payments will be made. In addition, if a dependent is under active treatment prior to January 1, 2005 the orthodontist will continue to be paid on a monthly schedule until the treatment is completed. Only new orthodontia treatment which starts after January 1, 2005 will employ the new quarterly reimbursement process.

**PUTNAM STABLE VALUE FUND TO REPLACE MONEY MARKET FUND
IN THE STEAMFITTERS' INDUSTRY SUPPLEMENTAL RETIREMENT PLAN**

On August 2, 2004 the Putnam Money Market Fund will be discontinued as an investment option and all balances in that fund or those future contributions directed to that fund will be transferred to the Putnam Stable Value Fund. In addition, the Stable Value Fund will become the Plan's new default fund.

Stable value funds are similar to money market funds, but can offer higher returns by preserving principal and accumulating earnings. More detailed information was mailed earlier this month to all participants. Please contact the Fund Office, Ext. 252, should you require further assistance.