

BY MATTHEW PAVELEK

WHY  
GETTING  
RAILROADED  
IS A GOOD THING

**Not everybody who serves in the military,** especially junior enlisted personnel with little or no civilian work experience, realize how valuable the training and skills they develop serving on active duty truly are to corporate America. Working long hours and handling ridiculously expensive equipment while keeping themselves and their co-workers safe are things civilian businesses >

U.S. rail carriers love hiring America's veterans. Did we mention the yearly compensation for rail workers averages \$108,900?





**JESS MULLANIX**, Data Analyst, Union Pacific Railroad

**Age:** 31 **Military Service:** Corporal (E-4), Marine Corps (2001-2009)

**Rating:** Heavy Equipment Technician

#### What Do You Do?

I currently am on the Process Improvement Team. I help support the Cable Modem Termination System [a piece of equipment used to provide high-speed data services] and requests from field and local employees.

#### Why the Railroad Industry?

I am a fourth generation railroader; however, the first one to work for Union Pacific.

#### How did your military training and experience prepare you for your civilian job?

I learned my work ethic and discipline from my military service. It has taught me to follow, and how to be a leader.

#### Biggest Difference?

Less structure and discipline.

#### Best Advice?

Never get discouraged or give up. Your service is a very important key to helping you get the civilian job you are looking for. Not only are you a tax credit, you're a U.S. veteran who has many skills to bring to the table. Learn how to articulate your skills and practice interviewing.

really appreciate when they hire workers, especially in the railroad industry.

"We value the leadership, reliability and high-tech skills veterans bring to Amtrak," says Patricia Kerins, talent acquisition manager and veteran hiring lead for Amtrak. "Their ability to adapt to a dynamic environment, their dedication and focus to safety and their experience gained while on military duty directly relates to a variety of operational and non-operational career opportunities at Amtrak."

#### A HISTORY OF HIRING VETS

Some industries are just catching on to the value veterans bring to their workforce, but the railroad industry has found the quality employees they need from the military for more than a century. Holly Arthur, assistant vice president of media and public affairs for the Association of American Railroads, says veterans are uniquely suited for long and successful careers in the railroad industry – and railroad companies know it.

"The industry's commitment to veterans is well-known, as freight railroads are consistently honored for their military recruiting efforts and enhanced benefit programs for employees called to active duty," Arthur says. "Freight railroads engage in programs with the military that identify talented service men and women and work with the armed forces to transition from military service to private-sector employment."

#### VETS IN VOLUME

In 2013, 813, or 25 percent, of Union Pacific Railroad's new hires were veterans, up from 22.7 percent in 2012.

"A total of 95 of our 2013 veteran hires – 12 percent – were disabled veterans, says ▶

## UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD



#### What They Do:

With 32,000 route miles of track in more than 7,300 communities, Union Pacific is a Fortune 200 company with 46,000 employees.



#### Top Jobs for Veterans:

- Transportation Manager
- Operations Management Trainee Program
- Mechanical Manager
- Operations Management Trainee Program
- Diesel Electrician
- Diesel Mechanic



#### Top Hiring Regions for Veterans:

- North
- South
- West



▶ Terry Huntington, director of recruiting for Union Pacific “Today, approximately 20 percent of all Union Pacific employees are veterans.”

Last year at BNSF Railroad more than 1,200, or 26 percent, of all new employees were veterans. Since 2005, BNSF has hired more than 6,500 veterans and currently employs more than 7,500 veterans, close to 17 percent of its total workforce. In addition, BNSF currently employs almost 400 active National Guard and/or Reserve members.

### TONS OF JOBS

According to the AAR, railroads provide more than 180,000 high-paying jobs and support more than a million more in all kinds of industries like manufacturing, agriculture and technology.

“Just as they did in the early years of our nation, America’s railroads continue to deliver prosperity across America,” Arthur says.

Railroads expected to hire 12,000 new

workers by the end of 2014.

Maurice Blue, senior sourcing officer for the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority, says WMATA plans to hire more than 2,600 new employees over the next two years.

“Positions will range from entry level

to executive management,” Blue says. “While the largest percentage of these positions will be bus operators and mechanics, vacancies will truly span all disciplines, including technical, operational, skilled trades, financial, safety and security, procurement, administrative and many more.” ▶



**CANDICE THOMAS**, Superintendent, Rail Operations Control Center, WMATA

Age: 35, **Military Service:** Staff Sergeant, Air Force (1998-2004)

**AFSC:** Air Traffic Control Specialist

#### What Do You Do?

I oversee the daily operations of the Rail Operations Control Center, which manages the entire Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. I manage the department’s budget, personnel and activities of train and station revenue operations.

#### Cooler Thing About Your Job?

I like the fast-paced environment and the satisfaction of knowing that I am in some way responsible for helping to move approximately 800,000 people safely and efficiently on a daily basis.

#### Best Advice?

Take full advantage of any and all transition assistance offered. Try to brush up on interviewing skills and résumé writing. Maintain your military work ethic, but still try to stay fluid and open-minded in dealing with the different kinds of people with totally different work ethics and habits than you are used to.

## WMATA

### What They Do:

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) operates and maintains transit service in the national capital region.



### Top Jobs for Veterans:

- Bus Maintenance Mechanic
- Metro Transit Police Officer
- Central Control Supervisor
- Metro Bus Operator
- Special Police Officer



### Top Hiring Regions for Veterans:

- Mid-Atlantic





## ► SWEET SALARIES AND BENEFITS

Railroads offer some of the best salary and benefit packages to employees. According to the AAR, freight rail employee compensation, including benefits, averages \$108,900 per year, with jobs ranging from engineers and dispatchers to law enforcement, information technology and industrial development.

Huntington says, depending on the discipline, salaries for the Union Pacific Operations Management Training Program typically range from \$58,000 to \$68,000. “For the diesel electrician the hourly rate is \$28.19 (\$58,697 per year) and the hourly rate for the diesel mechanic is \$28.22 an hour,” Huntington says.

John Wesley, military recruitment manager for BNSF, says the company pays \$21 to \$25 an hour (\$43,680–\$52,000 per year) for engineering positions and \$19 to \$23 an hour (\$39,520–\$47,840) for mechanical positions.

“Our conductor positions start off \$99 to \$160 a day,” Wesley says. “We offer enhanced and extended benefits for those employees called to active duty in the War on Terrorism, including make-whole pay and company-provided sustained health care benefits for the duration of the orders to include coverage for family members.”

## TRAINING PROVIDED

Not every military occupational specialty translates directly to a private-sector railroad job. But Arthur says experience gained on military duty directly relates to virtually all kinds of jobs at railroads. So if you have the right attitude and are willing to learn, the railroad industry is eager to train you to the skills you need to succeed. According to the AAR, railroads put tremendous emphasis on training for jobs in all areas. ►



**ERICA STIGALL**, Train Dispatcher, BNSF

Age: 25 **Military Service:** Staff Sergeant (E-6), Army National Guard (2000-Present)

**MOS:** Air Traffic Controller

### What Do You Do?

I am responsible for the safe and efficient movement of trains over an assigned territory in conjunction with planning maintenance operations, managing train crews, and adhering to Federal Railroad Administration regulations.

### How'd You Get That Job?

Shortly after returning from deployment a fellow battle buddy landed a job with BNSF Railway. After hearing how great of an opportunity it was, I knew I had to apply.

### Biggest Challenge?

As a member of the National Guard my training is never-ending. There are times when I am called to active duty for months on end and then I have to transition right back into the civilian sector. BNSF has made this transition effortless with constant support of my ongoing military training.

### Best Advice?

Never accept defeat. The transition from military to civilian can be a long treacherous road, but with the right mind set and company, you'll realize that you have all the tools you need to prosper.



## BNSF RAILWAY



### What They Do:

BNSF Railway is a North American freight transportation company operating on 32,500 route miles of track in 28 states and two Canadian provinces.



### Top Jobs for Veterans:

- Conductor Trainee
- Track Laborer
- Welder
- Train Dispatcher
- Field Operations Management



### Top Hiring Regions for Veterans:

- North (North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana)
- Midwest (Nebraska and Kansas)



► Blue says WMATA offers a combination of classroom and technical skills training supplemented by on-the-job training (OJT) for all positions.

Huntington says the Union Pacific Operations Management Training Program provides employees with anywhere from 10 months to three years of classroom and OJT, depending on the discipline. Diesel electricians and diesel mechanics also get formal classroom training and OJT.

### Freight Rail: Supporting Employees Through Competitive Salaries & Benefits

AVERAGE RAIL EMPLOYEE  
**\$109,700**  
2012 wages & benefits



AVERAGE U.S. EMPLOYEE  
**\$69,200**  
2012 wages & benefits

Source: AAR, Bureau of Economic Analysis

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#### THEY WANT TO KEEP YOU

“In a continued effort to support the nation’s service men and women, Amtrak has set a goal of ensuring 25 percent of its new hires are veterans by the end of 2015,” Kerins says.

Huntington says retaining veteran employees is just as important as recruiting them.

“To further improve retention of veteran hires, we implemented a new mentoring program in conjunction with UPVETS, our employee resource group for military veterans,” Huntington says. Through this program, existing military veteran employees help mentor new military hires. Mentors help our new military hires learn about company processes and culture, as well as transition to the civilian workforce.”

Blue strongly encourages transitioning service members to consider working for WMATA.

“At Metro, our mission is to operate and maintain a safe and reliable transit system that serves more than 1.3 million passengers a day,” Blue says. “Make our mission your mission. Your skills will be recognized and rewarded with competitive salaries and benefits.”

To learn more about your new railroad career visit [www.aar.org/jobs](http://www.aar.org/jobs). 