

Brothers and Sisters,

There are several issues of high importance to the members of our Local here at Cleveland. The bargaining committee and I have diligently made every effort to look out for the best interest of our Union while maintaining the integrity of our labor agreement being very conscious not to disrupt the capabilities of the plant in which we all make our living.

The Union and the Company have signed an LOU (Letter of Understanding) to defer payment of paid sick leave to individuals that will be laid off for a period not to exceed 12 months effective March 13, 2009. Deferral request must be submitted to the payroll department on the appropriate form no later than close of business on February 27, 2009. Deferral of payment must be the whole allocated amount, in other words you have to defer all or none of your paid sick leave.

The upcoming lay-off is one of the biggest concerns facing a majority of our membership at this time. The Company has arranged meetings on February 18th and 19th alphabetically by last name so that supporting agencies such as the Employment Security Commission, Department of Social Services, United Way and local Educational Institutions can come and talk to those individuals that will be affected by the lay-off.

The information that you will receive at these meetings can affect many areas of your future to include your unemployment benefits and your company paid insurance when your employment has ended. Historically participation has been minimal in these meetings and I strongly encourage everyone that will be laid-off to attend these meetings. The decisions we make or don't make will have a direct influence on our families.

Bargaining unit members affected by the lay off will be eligible to apply for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA) programs under sections 223 and 246 of the Trade Act of 1974. The petition submitted to the U.S Department of Labor on April 22, 2008 by Freightliner employees will be honored until April 22, 2010. Anyone laid off including skilled trades qualifies for these benefits. The program provides affected workers with many benefits while they are retrained to another job field. The local ESC (Employment Security Commission) will be able to answer any questions pertaining to this benefit.

In closing I would take this opportunity to say that we as a Union have tried without fail to keep as many people working as possible. It is with sincere regret that changes to all of our livelihoods is upcoming in the form of a reduction. Everyone will be affected in many different ways and I wish each one of you the best.

Fraternally yours,

Steve Barber
Shop Chair