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## Workers Feel Railroaded After ID Theft



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**Names and Social Security numbers belonging to 30,000 Union Pacific railroad workers could be in the hands of thieves after someone stole a computer containing that information from an employee.**

Although many places like colleges and driver's license bureaus have switched from identifying people by Social Security numbers, plenty of businesses have not done so.

An Iowa lawsuit filed by nine employees of America's biggest railroad, [Union Pacific](#), challenges the railroad's practice of using those numbers for employee identification.

A [report](#) in the San Francisco Chronicle noted the railroad had not yet seen the filing. Attorneys for Union Pacific had no comment on the action.

After the April 29th theft, the railroad informed the 30,000 people affected, and paid for a year of credit monitoring for them. Apparently, the person whose suffered the computer theft had transferred those work files to a personal machine to work on them at home. That employee's status with Union Pacific is not known.

William Platt, an employee cited in the report, said the railroad requires its workers to use their Social Security numbers to access employee information. This happens even though those workers have separate identification numbers that could be used instead.

While the suit addresses the usage of Social Security Numbers, there seems to be a deeper issue here. In the recent Veteran Affairs laptop incident, an analyst had been taking home data on millions of armed forces members for three years before it was stolen and subsequently recovered.

Union Pacific policies and practices with regards to data security, whatever they may be, certainly fall under the purview of Sarbanes-Oxley legislation. Those regulations require publicly traded companies to safeguard such data.

Come audit time, there could be some very painful questions for Union Pacific's IT staff waiting to be asked.

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