

**§ 51. Liability of common carriers by railroad, in interstate or foreign commerce, for injuries to employees from negligence; employee defined**

Every common carrier by railroad while engaging in commerce between any of the several States or Territories, or between any of the States and Territories, or between the District of Columbia and any of the States or Territories, or between the District of Columbia or any of the States or Territories and any foreign nation or nations, shall be liable in damages to any person suffering injury while he is employed by such carrier in such commerce, or, in case of the death of such employee, to his or her personal representative, for the benefit of the surviving widow or husband and children of such employee; and, if none, then of such employee's parents; and, if none, then of the next of kin dependent upon such employee, for such injury or death resulting in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents, or employees of such carrier, or by reason of any defect or insufficiency, due to its negligence, in its cars, engines, appliances, machinery, track, roadbed, works, boats, wharves, or other equipment.

Any employee of a carrier, any part of whose duties as such employee shall be the furtherance of interstate or foreign commerce; or shall, in any way directly or closely and substantially, affect such commerce as above set forth shall, for the purposes of this chapter, be considered as being employed by such carrier in such commerce and shall be considered as entitled to the benefits of this chapter.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 1, 35 Stat. 65; Aug. 11, 1939, ch. 685, § 1, 53 Stat. 1404.)

AMENDMENTS

1939—Act Aug. 11, 1939, inserted last par.

SHORT TITLE

The Act of Apr. 22, 1908, as amended, which comprises this chapter, is popularly known as the "Employers' Liability Act".

The following are also popularly known as Employers' Liability Acts:

June 11, 1906, ch. 3073, 34 Stat. 232 [Unconstitutional].

Apr. 5, 1910, ch. 143, 36 Stat. 291. See sections 56 and 59 of this title.

Aug. 11, 1939, ch. 685, 53 Stat. 1404. See sections 51, 54, 56, and 60 of this title.

**§ 52. Carriers in Territories or other possessions of United States**

Every common carrier by railroad in the Territories, the District of Columbia, the Panama Canal Zone, or other possessions of the United States shall be liable in damages to any person suffering injury while he is employed by such carrier in any of said jurisdictions, or, in case of the death of such employee, to his or her personal representative, for the benefit of the surviving widow or husband and children of such employee; and, if none, then of such employee's parents; and, if none, then of the next of kin dependent upon such employee, for such injury or death resulting in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents, or employees of such carrier, or by reason of any defect or insufficiency, due to its negligence, in its cars,

engines, appliances, machinery, track, roadbed, works, boats, wharves, or other equipment.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 2, 35 Stat. 65.)

**§ 53. Contributory negligence; diminution of damages**

In all actions on and after April 22, 1908 brought against any such common carrier by railroad under or by virtue of any of the provisions of this chapter to recover damages for personal injuries to an employee, or where such injuries have resulted in his death, the fact that the employee may have been guilty of contributory negligence shall not bar a recovery, but the damages shall be diminished by the jury in proportion to the amount of negligence attributable to such employee: *Provided*, That no such employee who may be injured or killed shall be held to have been guilty of contributory negligence in any case where the violation by such common carrier of any statute enacted for the safety of employees contributed to the injury or death of such employee.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 3, 35 Stat. 66.)

**§ 54. Assumption of risks of employment**

In any action brought against any common carrier under or by virtue of any of the provisions of this chapter to recover damages for injuries to, or the death of, any of its employees, such employee shall not be held to have assumed the risks of his employment in any case where such injury or death resulted in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents, or employees of such carrier; and no employee shall be held to have assumed the risks of his employment in any case where the violation by such common carrier of any statute enacted for the safety of employees contributed to the injury or death of such employee.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 4, 35 Stat. 66; Aug. 11, 1939, ch. 685, § 1, 53 Stat. 1404.)

AMENDMENTS

1939—Act Aug. 11, 1939, inserted "where such injury or death resulted in whole or in part from the negligence of any of the officers, agents, or employees of such carrier; and no employee shall be held to have assumed the risks of his employment in any case" after "of his employment in any case".

**§ 54a. Certain Federal and State regulations deemed statutory authority**

A regulation, standard, or requirement in force, or prescribed by the Secretary of Transportation under chapter 201 of title 49 or by a State agency that is participating in investigative and surveillance activities under section 20105 of title 49, is deemed to be a statute under sections 53 and 54 of this title.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 4A, as added Pub. L. 103-272, § 4(i), July 5, 1994, 108 Stat. 1365.)

**§ 55. Contract, rule, regulation, or device exempting from liability; set-off**

Any contract, rule, regulation, or device whatsoever, the purpose or intent of which shall be to enable any common carrier to exempt itself from any liability created by this chapter, shall

to that extent be void: *Provided*, That in any action brought against any such common carrier under or by virtue of any of the provisions of this chapter, such common carrier may set off therein any sum it has contributed or paid to any insurance, relief benefit, or indemnity that may have been paid to the injured employee or the person entitled thereto on account of the injury or death for which said action was brought.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 5, 35 Stat. 66.)

**§ 56. Actions; limitation; concurrent jurisdiction of courts**

No action shall be maintained under this chapter unless commenced within three years from the day the cause of action accrued.

Under this chapter an action may be brought in a district court of the United States, in the district of the residence of the defendant, or in which the cause of action arose, or in which the defendant shall be doing business at the time of commencing such action. The jurisdiction of the courts of the United States under this chapter shall be concurrent with that of the courts of the several States.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 6, 35 Stat. 66; Apr. 5, 1910, ch. 143, § 1, 36 Stat. 291; Mar. 3, 1911, ch. 231, § 291, 36 Stat. 1167; Aug. 11, 1939, ch. 685, § 2, 53 Stat. 1404; June 25, 1948, ch. 646, § 18, 62 Stat. 989.)

CODIFICATION

The first par. of this section is from act Apr. 22, 1908.  
The second par. of this section is from act Apr. 5, 1910.

AMENDMENTS

1948—Act June 25, 1948, struck out provision in last sentence relating to removal of actions.

1939—Act Aug. 11, 1939, changed limitation in first sentence from two to three years.

CHANGE OF NAME

“District court” substituted in text for “circuit court” to conform to act Mar. 3, 1911, which transferred powers and duties of circuit courts to district courts.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1948 AMENDMENT

Act June 25, 1948, ch. 646, § 38, 62 Stat. 992, provided that the amendment made by that act is effective Sept. 1, 1948.

**§ 57. Who included in term “common carrier”**

The term “common carrier” as used in this chapter shall include the receiver or receivers or other persons or corporations charged with the duty of the management and operation of the business of a common carrier.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 7, 35 Stat. 66.)

**§ 58. Duty or liability of common carriers and rights of employees under other acts not impaired**

Nothing in this chapter shall be held to limit the duty or liability of common carriers or to impair the rights of their employees under any other Act or Acts of Congress.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 8, 35 Stat. 66.)

**§ 59. Survival of right of action of person injured**

Any right of action given by this chapter to a person suffering injury shall survive to his or

her personal representative, for the benefit of the surviving widow or husband and children of such employee, and, if none, then of such employee’s parents; and, if none, then of the next of kin dependent upon such employee, but in such cases there shall be only one recovery for the same injury.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 9, as added Apr. 5, 1910, ch. 143, § 2, 36 Stat. 291.)

**§ 60. Penalty for suppression of voluntary information incident to accidents; separability**

Any contract, rule, regulation, or device whatsoever, the purpose, intent, or effect of which shall be to prevent employees of any common carrier from furnishing voluntarily information to a person in interest as to the facts incident to the injury or death of any employee, shall be void, and whoever, by threat, intimidation, order, rule, contract, regulation, or device whatsoever, shall attempt to prevent any person from furnishing voluntarily such information to a person in interest, or whoever discharges or otherwise disciplines or attempts to discipline any employee for furnishing voluntarily such information to a person in interest, shall, upon conviction thereof, be punished by a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or by both such fine and imprisonment, for each offense: *Provided*, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to void any contract, rule, or regulation with respect to any information contained in the files of the carrier, or other privileged or confidential reports.

If any provision of this chapter is declared unconstitutional or the applicability thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of the chapter and the applicability of such provision to other persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

(Apr. 22, 1908, ch. 149, § 10, as added Aug. 11, 1939, ch. 685, § 3, 53 Stat. 1404.)

**CHAPTER 3—HOURS OF SERVICE OF EMPLOYEES**

**§§ 61 to 64b. Repealed. Pub. L. 103–272, § 7(b), July 5, 1994, 108 Stat. 1379**

Section 61, acts Mar. 4, 1907, ch. 2939, § 1, 34 Stat. 1415; Dec. 26, 1969, Pub. L. 91–169, § 1, 83 Stat. 463; July 8, 1976, Pub. L. 94–348, § 4(c), 90 Stat. 818; Nov. 2, 1978, Pub. L. 95–574, §§ 5, 6, 92 Stat. 2461; June 22, 1988, Pub. L. 100–342, § 16(1), 102 Stat. 634, provided that this chapter applied to any railroad and defined “railroad”, “employee”, “time on duty”, and “designated terminal” for purposes of this chapter. See sections 20102, 21101, and 21103 of Title 49, Transportation.

Section 62, acts Mar. 4, 1907, ch. 2939, § 2, 34 Stat. 1416; Oct. 15, 1966, Pub. L. 89–670, § 6(e)(2), 80 Stat. 939; Dec. 26, 1969, Pub. L. 91–169, § 1, 83 Stat. 463; July 8, 1976, Pub. L. 94–348, § 4(a), (b), 90 Stat. 818; June 22, 1988, Pub. L. 100–342, §§ 16(2), 19(b)(1), 102 Stat. 634, 638, related to limitations on employees’ hours of service, determination of number of hours an employee is on duty, additional duty for crew of wreck or relief trains during emergencies, and inapplicability of this section when provisions of section 63 of this title applied, and defined “employees” for purpose of subsec. (a)(3) of this section. See sections 21103, 21105, and 21106 of Title 49.

Section 63, acts Mar. 4, 1907, ch. 2939, § 3, 34 Stat. 1416; May 4, 1916, ch. 109, § 1, 39 Stat. 61; Aug. 14, 1957, Pub. L. 85–135, § 2, 71 Stat. 352; Oct. 15, 1966, Pub. L. 89–670,