

# MACHINISTS HEALTH AND WELFARE TRUST FUND

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Administered by  
Welfare and Pension Administration Service, Inc.

April 10, 2003

**TO: All Participants and their Spouses**

**RE: Implementation of Privacy Regulations**

Enclosed is the Policy and Procedures on Health Information Privacy for the Machinists Health and Welfare Trust Fund. Federal law requires that the Trust provide this Policy to you by April 14, 2003, when the federal privacy regulations become effective for the Trust. The Policy describes the circumstances under which your health information may be used or disclosed.

You should review the Policy carefully and retain it with your Plan Booklet. The Policy lists the Trust's Privacy Official and Privacy Contact Person, who have been designated by the Trustees to answer your questions about the privacy of your health information.

You should also be aware that the federal privacy regulations will impact how the Trust answers inquiries from you, or that are made on your behalf. The Trust will continue to confirm eligibility, describe the benefits available and provide general information as before. The Trust will also respond to specific inquiries made by an individual concerning his own health information, after some basic questions are asked to verify the individual's identity.

If you are seeking specific information about your minor child, the information will, in most situations, be available as before. However, if state law allows a minor child to consent to or obtain a health care service without parental consent, federal law generally requires that the Trust Office obtain an authorization from the child prior to discussing the child's health information with you.

If you are seeking health information about another adult individual, such as your spouse, and are able to provide claim information (e.g., the individual's identification number, the month and year of service, provider's name, and the procedure) the Trust will answer claim-related questions. However, if you are seeking other specific health information, the Trust in most cases will be required to obtain a written authorization from that individual.

Here are some examples of when federal law requires the Trust to obtain a written authorization to release health information:

- A participant's spouse contacts the Trust Office regarding the participant's mental health diagnosis and treatment. The Trust can confirm the participant's general eligibility for benefits. However, federal law will generally require that the Trust Office obtain a written authorization from the participant prior to discussing the participant's diagnosis and treatment with the spouse.

- A participant contacts his union representative regarding a medical procedure that was denied by the Trust. The union representative then telephones the Trust Office about the participant's claim. If the union representative can provide claim information, the Trust Office can answer certain claim-related questions. However, a written authorization from the participant will generally be required to discuss other specific health information.
- State law allows a child who is 13 and older to receive outpatient chemical dependency treatment without parental consent. If the participant's 15-year-old child obtains such treatment, federal law will generally require that the Trust Office obtain a written authorization from the child prior to discussing the child's treatment with the participant.

Authorization forms are available from the Trust Office, and will also become available on the Trust's website at [www.wpas-inc.com](http://www.wpas-inc.com).

The Trust understands that the changes mandated by the federal regulations may be frustrating initially. The Trust is working to assure your privacy rights are being protected as required by law while making the changes with as little disruption as is practical.

**The Board of Trustees**  
**Machinists Health and Welfare Trust Fund**

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