

## SUMMARY

### **Metro-North Railroad: Status and Return to Duty Requirements for Personnel on Extended Health-Related Absences** **MTA/OIG Report #08-06**

This OIG audit examined the effectiveness of Metro-North (MNR) procedures for monitoring employees with extended health-related absences (i.e., medical leaves lasting more than four consecutive weeks) during 2006. Although the majority of cases we reviewed met MNR extended medical leave requirements, we found some lapses in the agency's procedures for tracking and documenting the health status of its employees. For example, a number of employees remained on the active status roster even while on extended health-related absences.

The audit determined that the employee monitoring problems resulted from breakdowns in departmental procedures to review extended leave cases, permissive treatment of absent employees who failed to comply with documentation requests, and MNR Occupational Health Services' acceptance of perfunctory doctors' notes from returning employees.

To address these concerns, MNR issued a new Employee Information Processing Operating Procedure that centralized extended leave monitoring responsibilities within its Department of Human Resources (HR). While recognizing MNR efforts in this area, the OIG's report recommended that HR strictly oversee the performance of departmental managers and supervisors who remain directly responsible for initiating status changes and requesting medical documentation. The OIG also recommended that MNR clarify and strengthen existing documentation requirements for employees returning from lengthy absences. MNR accepted the report's recommendations, and the OIG will continue to monitor their progress as appropriate.