



Newsletter on the
Latest Technologies
Developed by RTRI

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Railway Technology Avalanche

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Two Problems Heading Our Way in 2007

Kenji SHIRATORI
Executive Director

Japan will be jolted by two problems in 2007. One problem is that most baby boomers born in the 1947-1949 period — the sons and daughters of men who returned from the war and quickly married and had children — will soon be retiring. (Perhaps I should mention that I was born in 1948.) Many technical experts with years of experience and know-how will disappear from the workplace. This will be a problem for all of Japan, because these experts will no longer be available to pass their technical skills on to the next generation of workers.

This is a major problem for the Japanese rail industry, too. Railway operators, large and small, are anxious about how they will maintain and improve their technologies in the years ahead.

During January 2006 at J-RAIL 2005 (an annual symposium on railway technology held by the Japan Society of Civil Engineers, the Institute of Electrical Engineers of Japan and the Japan Society of Mechanical Engineers), I chaired a panel discussion labeled "The Maintenance and Transfer of Railway Technology Now at Stake: How to Prevent the Loss of Railway Technology." The discussion came to the conclusion that all players in the Japanese rail industry should cooperate in resolving this problem, and that they should make good use of the expertise of retirees.

The other problem looming ahead, ready to strike in 2007, involves the public pension system. According to pension law reforms, beginning in 2007 wives will have the right to claim half of their husband's pension. It seems that quite a



few wives are thinking of getting divorced when the new rule kicks in. The most critical time is right after the husband receives a handsome retirement allowance. Husbands are well advised to take care not to be left alone with just half of their retirement allowance and half of their pension!

白取健治