



POLICY ALERT

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UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS EXTENDED FOR THOSE LEFT JOBLESS BY HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA

Displaced Workers Are Encouraged to Contact State Agencies to Claim Extension

On Monday, the President signed legislation extending disaster unemployment assistance (DUA) at least 13 weeks for workers who lost their jobs as a result of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. For those left jobless as a result of Hurricane Katrina, their benefits expired on Saturday, March 4. Most Rita-related unemployment benefits are set to expire on March 25.

Thousands of Texans Could Qualify

Disaster Unemployment Assistance applies to the self-employed and workers who wouldn't originally qualify for regular unemployment benefits, as well as those who were unemployed because of the storms and are now reaching the end of their regular unemployment benefits.

This extension is particularly significant because the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will reimburse all DUA payments related to the extension. The previous 6-month period was funded entirely by the affected states through their unemployment insurance trust funds.

Katrina

About 19,500 of the approximately 90,000 Katrina evacuees still eligible for DUA, have Texas addresses. The Louisiana Department of Labor will attempt to notify these workers of their rights to the extended benefits. Because of problems of locating individuals via U.S. mail, anyone whose DUA or unemployment insurance (UI) ran out should contact the Louisiana Department of Labor, even if their benefits were previously terminated due to call-in requirements implemented in November.

For general claims information related to Hurricane Katrina, contact the Louisiana Department of Labor Help Line at 1-866-783-5567 or visit www.laworks.net. An exclusive toll-free line to process DUA claim extensions has not yet been established.

Rita

Of those individuals unemployed due to Hurricane Rita, about 800 DUA claimants are currently receiving benefits. The Texas Workforce Commission is responsible for notifying these claimants about their qualifications to receive an extension. Additionally, 1,613 UI claimants are unemployed due to Hurricane Rita. Both Rita-related UI and DUA claimants are potentially eligible to receive extended DUA benefits. Three weeks prior to the end of their UI period, TWC will notify these claimants of the extension and the procedures for making an extended DUA claim. To contact regional TWC telecenters and file a claim, visit <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/ui/bnfts/offices.html>.

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