

October 19, 2017

Unemployment Bulletin

Disaster Unemployment Assistance available in Puerto Rico

SITUATION: In a press release dated October 18, 2017, the Puerto Rico Bureau of Employment Security (BES) announced Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) has been made available to all 78 municipalities on the island.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017. A Presidential declaration of disaster was put into effect making DUA funding available. The deadline for filing a DUA claim is November 13, 2017. After this date, the claim will not be considered timely and will not be honored. Claims are being taken by the BES at the BES office closest to the applicant's residence or at any American Job Center. Claims can be filed Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm.

More information on this recent DUA declaration can be found utilizing one of the following links:

English: <http://www.trabajo.pr.gov/pdf/Mar%C3%ADa%20Ing..pdf>

Spanish: <http://www.trabajo.pr.gov/pdf/Mar%C3%ADa%20Esp..pdf>

Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is a partnering program between the USDOL and FEMA to provide funds to state UI agencies for the payment of UI benefits under certain circumstances. It provides disaster unemployment assistance to individuals who have lost employment as the result of a major disaster and are NOT otherwise eligible for regular UI benefits.

Individuals are eligible if they lived, worked, or were scheduled to work in the affected areas and:

- No longer have a job or place to work; or
- Cannot reach the place of work; or
- Cannot work as the result of damage to the place of work; or
- Cannot work due to injury sustained in the disaster
- Became the breadwinner or major supporter of a household due to the death of head of household resulting from the disaster

DUA benefits are only payable during the Disaster Assistance Period (DAP) not to exceed 26 weeks. The weekly benefit amount for which the person may be eligible is determined by the governing laws in the state in which the claim was filed. Any benefits claimed under the DUA program are 100% federally funded which means employers' UI accounts will not be charged. While employer chargeability for regular UI that is related to a disaster varies from state to state, Puerto Rico statute does not provide for relief of charges to affected employers. This also applies to reimbursing employers. As with all UI claims in Puerto Rico, regular UI claims filed as a result of this disaster will be subject to a 1-week waiting period (if not already served in his/her current benefit year).

ACTION STEPS: More information on the DUA program can be found at:

<http://workforcsecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/disaster.asp>

It bears repeating that the deadline for filing DUA claims related to storms in the above listed counties is November 13, 2017.