

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE MAY BE AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY WILDFIRES

Work search and other requirements may be waived for claimants affected by fires

(DENVER) – In response to inquiries from individuals who have become unemployed because of a wildfire evacuation or because their worksite has been impacted by a wildfire, the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment announced today that these individuals may be eligible for unemployment benefits and should file a claim online.

Individuals may be eligible for unemployment assistance if their unemployment resulted from the physical damage or destruction of their place of employment or because of the physical inaccessibility of the worksite due to its closure by the federal, state or local government in immediate response to a wildfire.

Claims can be filed at www.colorado.gov/cdle (click on “file or reopen an unemployment claim”).

In addition, the Department of Labor and Employment is announcing that individuals who are currently receiving unemployment benefits while living in a burn area will receive a waiver from their requirement to seek work beginning the week the fire began in their area. The High Park Wildfire began on June 9 and the start date for both the Weber Fire and the Waldo Canyon Fire was June 24.

These individuals must continue requesting payment of unemployment benefits as they always have. As long as the fire is the only circumstance that is preventing them from looking for work, they should report that they are able to work, available and looking for work.

Some claimants impacted by one of the fires may currently be receiving Emergency Unemployment Compensation (benefit payments that are beyond the initial 26 weeks). Under normal circumstances, to remain eligible for those federal benefits, individuals must complete a series of reemployment services within six weeks. However, for the immediate future, the Department of Labor and Employment is extending the amount of time in which those claimants must complete the services.

(More)

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The Division of Unemployment Insurance will verify that affected individuals' addresses are in burn or evacuation areas (currently, these include 80512, 80526, 80535, 80536, 80538, 80809, 80819, 80840, 80904, 80907, 80919 and 80921) and that their usual requirements for Unemployment Insurance benefits are being temporarily waived. They will still be required to complete all of the services in the future.

More information on these waivers is available on the News and Alerts section of the Department of Labor and Employment's website (go to www.colorado.gov/cdle and look for "News and Alerts" at the bottom of the home page). The Department is also utilizing social media, hold messages, and is working with Workforce Centers in affected parts of the state in providing information to affected claimants.

Colorado has not yet been deemed eligible for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), a federal program that provides temporary financial assistance to workers and self-employed individuals who have lost their jobs because of a disaster and who do not qualify for regular unemployment benefits. If DUA should become available to Colorado, the Department of Labor and Employment will notify news outlets and conduct an outreach effort to potentially eligible victims.

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