

LOUISIANA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Workforce Commission News Update

Disaster Assistance available for victims of Hurricane Gustav

BATON ROUGE - People whose jobs have been lost or interrupted because of the disaster in the 36 parishes eligible for individual disaster assistance as a result of Hurricane Gustav also are eligible for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), the Louisiana Workforce Commission announced today.

Those parishes are Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Cameron, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Sabine, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Vermilion, Vernon, West Baton Rouge and West Feliciana.

Those eligible must file DUA applications within 30 days of this announcement. The deadline to file is Oct 6, 2008. Applications submitted later may be denied.

Gov. Bobby Jindal requested the disaster declaration for 54 parishes on Sept. 2, 2008, after determining that the incident was of such severity and magnitude that effective response was beyond the capabilities of the state and the affected local governments. President Bush signed the federal disaster declaration, resulting in the authorization of federal assistance for 34 parishes. Gov. Jindal sent a request asking for the addition of the other 20 parishes included in his initial request. St. Tammany and Tangipahoa were added to the declaration on Sept. 4.

The DUA program, administered by the Louisiana Workforce Commission, is now accepting claims and will continue until the end of the 30-day filing period.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission's administration building and Unemployment Insurance call center are experiencing power outages as a result of Hurricane Gustav. The outages prevented the Commission from accepting Unemployment Insurance claims. However, the Commission has implemented a plan to transfer certain operations to alternate sites, which allows the call center to begin taking new Disaster Unemployment Assistance claims today.

Those filing new Disaster Unemployment Assistance claims should call 1-866-783-5567. The call center will operate from 6 a.m. - 10 p.m., seven days a week until further notice.

The LWC's Business and Career Solutions Centers also can help people file claims. Centers in central and north Louisiana are open and will be staffed seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to assist job seekers and employers.

In the southern part of the state, centers are open in Bogalusa, Hammond, Lafayette, Lake Charles and DeRidder. These centers also will be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week.

Centers in other damaged areas will reopen as soon as electricity and Internet service are restored.

Mobile units, including four from Texas, are being sent to high-volume areas throughout south Louisiana to assist citizens with job needs. The first of these units is in Baton Rouge today at the Business and Career Solutions Center on Wooddale Boulevard. A schedule of additional locations will be issued on Monday, Sept. 8.

To receive DUA benefits, individuals must provide their social security number, proof of wages, and proof of employment, including the name and address of the last employer. Proof of employment must be received within 21 days from the filing date of the claim. Self-employed individuals must provide their business and financial records, including federal income tax returns for 2007.

DUA is available to individuals for weeks of unemployment beginning Sept. 7, 2008, through March 7, 2009, as long as the claimant's unemployment continues to be a result of Hurricane Gustav. DUA benefits will not be paid for any period of unemployment before or after these dates.

DUA provides benefits to individuals whose employment or self-employment has been lost or interrupted as a direct result of a major disaster. Before an individual can be determined eligible for DUA, it must be established that the individual is not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits (under any state or federal law).

DUA is available to unemployed U.S. nationals and qualified aliens who worked or were self-employed if they:

Worked or were self employed in or were scheduled to begin work or self employment in an area declared as a federal disaster area.

Can no longer work or perform services because of physical damage or destruction to the place of employment as a direct result of a disaster.

Establish that the work or self employment they can no longer perform was their primary source of income.

Do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance benefits from any state.

Cannot perform work or self employment because of an injury or because they were incapacitated as a direct result of the disaster.

Became the breadwinner or major support of a household because of the death of the head of the household.

Cannot work or perform self employment due to closure of a facility by the federal government.

Lose a majority of income or revenue because the employer or self-employed business was damaged, destroyed, or closed by the federal government. Suffering a monetary loss due to damage of property or crops does not automatically entitle an individual to Disaster Unemployment Assistance.

For the latest on Hurricane Gustav, you can visit emergency.louisiana.gov or call the state's emergency hotline at 1-866-288-2484 to listen to a recorded message with the most up-to-date information