



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Amendment to Major Disaster Declaration opens DUA due to flooding and adds Otero County

ALBUQUERQUE – The Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency has issued an amendment adding Otero County and flooding to the notice of Major Disaster Declaration in New Mexico declared by the President on June 20, 2024.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is available to individuals whose employment or self-employment was lost or interrupted as a direct result of the 2024 Wildfires in the areas of Lincoln County, Otero County, and the Mescalero Apache Tribe.

The process to apply for DUA benefits includes two steps:

1. An individual must first apply for Standard Unemployment Insurance. This may be done online anytime 24/7 at <https://www.jobs.state.nm.us>, in person at any Workforce Connection Center, or by calling the Unemployment Insurance Operations center at 1-877-664-6984, Monday through Friday, 8am-4:30pm. Claimants filing their standard unemployment insurance claim online should be sure to check the box indicating that they have been affected by the fires.
2. After an individual receives notice that they are not eligible for Standard Unemployment Insurance, they may then apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance by calling the Unemployment Insurance Operations Center or by coming in person to any New Mexico Workforce Connection Center. As a fraud prevention measure, DUA applications are only accepted in person or by phone.

In addition to the standard hours of operation, the Department of Workforce Solutions, in collaboration with the Eastern Area Local Workforce Development Board will continue to provide services from the Roswell Convention Center.

Individuals who lost work or employment in the designated disaster areas must file DUA applications by August 19, 2024, DUA is available to those who:

- Worked or were self-employed or were scheduled to begin work or self-employment; and
- Do not qualify for regular unemployment benefits, or Extended Benefits (EB) from any state; and
- Fall into at least one of the following categories:

- Were unable to reach their job or self-employment location because they must travel through the affected area and are prevented from doing so by the disaster; or
- Can no longer work or perform services because of physical damage or destruction to the place of employment as a direct result of the disaster; or
- Cannot physically access the place of employment due to its closure by the federal, state, or local government in immediate response to the disaster; or
- Can establish that the work or self-employment they can no longer perform was their principal source of income; or
- Cannot perform work or self-employment because of an injury as a direct result of the disaster; or
- Became the breadwinner or major support of a household because of the death related to the disaster/fire.

Claimants should file as soon as possible. Applications filed after the August 19, 2024 deadline will be considered untimely, and DUA benefits may be denied unless the individual provides good cause for filing after that date.

Proof of employment/self-employment must be submitted no later than 21 days after filing for a DUA claim. The following documents are acceptable as proof of employment:

- Payroll voucher closest in date to the last work week
- Employment and earnings statement from employer with name, address and contact information
- Written statement from employer
- Business records (bank statements, business receipts, licenses, advertisements, invoices, appointment books, financial statements)
- Notarized statement from person with name, address, and contact information who can verify your self-employment and unemployment

If an individual is self-employed, their 2023 federal income tax return and schedules can serve as proof of prior wages but does not substantiate their proof of employment at the time of the disaster.

DUA is available for weeks of unemployment beginning June 23, 2024 until December 21, 2024, as long as the individual's unemployment continues to be a direct result of the disaster.

DUA applications are only accepted in person or by phone. If an individual applies for benefits by phone or in person, they will automatically receive their benefits via debit card unless they had a previous claim where they received direct deposit. A claimant can change their payment method to direct deposit at any time by logging onto their claimant homepage on the Unemployment Insurance Tax & Claims system at <https://www.jobs.state.nm.us>. Claimants who do not elect to receive payments through direct deposit should provide a safe address that will be accessible even during evacuation periods, and at which a trusted person will be receiving the mail.

Individuals who are applying in person for DUA may go to any New Mexico Workforce Connection Center (<https://www.dws.state.nm.us/Office-Locations>) to speak with an NMDWS representative Monday through Friday 8am-5pm.

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The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) oversees the New Mexico public workforce system. The department is committed to supporting the business community and assisting New Mexicans seeking employment opportunities by bridging the link between employer needs and the skilled workforce. The department administers programs to include business services; workforce training; Unemployment Insurance; labor law enforcement; veterans' services; and labor market information.