

Washington Employment Security Department

Unemployment benefits for state employees

Questions & Answers

1. Can I apply for unemployment benefits if I am subject to temporary layoff?

Yes, you can file for unemployment benefits if no state budget is passed by June 30 and you are temporarily laid off as a result.

2. How do I apply for unemployment benefits?

To apply for benefits:

Apply online: Go online to eServices at secure.esd.wa.gov 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is usually faster than applying by phone.

Apply by phone: Call the unemployment claims center at 800-318-6022, Tuesday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., except for state holidays. Certain rules apply, so read the [unemployment benefit page](#) before you call.

3. When should I apply?

You can apply for benefits at any time. However, we recommend waiting until a shutdown actually happens. Claims are generally effective the week they are filed, but you can backdate your claim one week.

Because you can backdate your claim one week and must serve a waiting week (see *When will I get my first payment?* below), we encourage you to wait until the week of July 9-15 to apply. You'll be able to make your claim effective July 2, the first week affected by a shutdown. It is unlikely any shutdown will occur, and even less likely that it will last into a second week.

4. How much will I get?

Your earnings during your base year determine how much you get each week and the total amount you may receive. Your base year is the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters at the time you apply for benefits.

You must have worked at least 680 hours during your base year to be eligible for benefits. If you don't have 680 hours in your regular base year period, we can use the last four completed calendar quarters as an "alternate base year."

If you apply after July 2 but before October 1, the base year will be April 2016 – March 2017 and the alternate base year will be July 2016 – June 2017.

To calculate your weekly benefit amount, use our [online](#) benefit calculator.

For new applications effective July 2, the maximum weekly benefit amount is \$713 and the minimum weekly benefit amount is \$169.

5. How do I claim benefits?

You must submit a weekly claim each week you would like to receive benefits. When you file your weekly claim, you are answering questions about the prior week that ended on Saturday. You cannot claim a week until it is over.

You may file your weekly claim online at esd.wa.gov or by phone at 800-318-6022. You may file your weekly claim anytime between midnight Sunday through 4 p.m. Friday if filing by phone or through Saturday if filing online.

6. When will I get my first payment?

You are not paid for the first eligible week of your claim. It is a “waiting week” and it is unpaid. You must claim the week to have it count. This means that you will be entering your third week of unemployment before you get paid.

7. Since these layoffs are temporary, will I have to look for work?

If there is a temporary layoff, impacted state employees will return to work as soon as a budget is signed. Accordingly, the Employment Security Department received a request from the Office of Financial Management to allow all full-time state workers standby in the event of a shutdown. ESD has approved this request, meaning you will not have to complete the job search requirement to receive your unemployment benefits.

8. Can I receive my benefits by direct deposit or debit card?

Yes. You must apply for direct deposit online. To change your payment method online:

- Sign into [eServices](#). In the *About me* section, choose *Update*. Then under *I want to*, choose *Update payment information* and follow the instructions.

9. Where can I get additional information about unemployment benefits?

You may read the [frequently asked questions about unemployment benefits](#) on our website.

You may read or download the [Handbook for Unemployed Workers](#) from our website. If you need a printed copy, you can pick one up at your local [WorkSource office](#) or contact the unemployment claims center at 800-318-6022 and speak to a claims agent.