



Emergency Unemployment Compensation & Extended Benefits

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What happens if a laid-off worker uses up his regular unemployment benefits? In Washington, there are two possible options for continuing to pay benefits:

- 1) The Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program was activated by Congress in June 2008, then extended in November 2008 and again in February 2009 (as part of the federal stimulus package approved by President Obama).
- 2) The Extended-Benefits Program is triggered when certain unemployment conditions exist in the state. The federal Department of Labor notified Employment Security in January 2009 that Washington meets those conditions, and the extended benefits became available as of Feb. 15.

Following is more information about both benefits programs.

People who run out of their regular unemployment benefits may receive up to 33 weeks of emergency unemployment benefits

Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program

The Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) Program provides additional unemployment benefits to people who have used all of their regular unemployment benefits. The weekly benefit amount is the same as a claimant's regular unemployment benefits.

EUC benefits are funded 100 percent by the federal government. There is no effect on the balance of the state's unemployment trust fund or on employer tax rates. These benefits will not affect employers' experience rating or benefit charges, and reimbursable employers (e.g., government agencies, tribes and some non-profit organizations) will not be billed.

EUC paid 100% by federal government

When Congress approved the program in June 2008, EUC provided up to 13 extra weeks of unemployment benefits in all 50 states. Congress later expanded the program to provide up to seven additional weeks of benefits in all states, plus another 13 weeks of benefits in states whose unemployment rate reaches a specific 6 percent threshold (based on a three-month average of the state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate). Washington reached the 6 percent trigger in November 2008, making its unemployed workers potentially eligible for up to a total of 33 weeks of EUC benefits.

Applications must be submitted on or before December 31, 2009

Presently, the program is accepting applications through Dec. 31, 2009, with payouts to eligible claimants through May 31, 2010.

EUC benefits can be paid only through May 31, 2010

EUC eligibility

Unemployed workers qualify for EUC if:

- Their last claim was in Washington; and
- That claim began on or after May 7, 2006; and
- The benefit year on the claim has ended or has no balance left to pay out; and
- The claimant meets base-year earning requirements; and
- The claimant is not eligible for a regular claim in any state, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the District of Columbia or Canada.

Potentially eligible claimants automatically receive their EUC and extended-benefit applications in the mail

While some people with old unemployment claims qualify for EUC, the benefits were **payable** beginning July 6, 2008.

EUC application process

In July 2008, Employment Security mailed paper applications to more than 120,000 potentially eligible claimants. Those who use up their regular benefits after that automatically receive an EUC application to complete.

People who do not automatically receive an EUC application in the mail can get one from a local WorkSource office or by calling the EUC Office (877-558-8509). An online system is not available for **initial** EUC applications, and Employment Security cannot accept faxed applications. However, people can file their **ongoing, weekly** claims for EUC on the Internet (www.esd.wa.gov), by telephone (800-318-6022, option 1) or on paper. The work-search requirements and exceptions to work-search requirements are the same as for regular unemployment benefits.

Extended-Benefits Program

Currently, eligible unemployed workers in Washington may receive up to 20 weeks of “extended benefits.” Here’s how the program works.

Extended benefits can provide additional weeks of benefits to people who have received all of their regular unemployment benefits. Under state law, up to 13 weeks of extended benefits are payable starting the third week after either of these unemployment-rate “triggers” is met.

- **Option #1: “total unemployment rate.”** If the seasonally adjusted total unemployment rate averages at least 6.5 percent over three months **and** is at least 10 percent higher than the same three-month average in either of the last two years; or
- **Option #2: “average insured-unemployment rate.”** For the current week and preceding 12 weeks, if at least 5 percent of insured workers are receiving unemployment benefits **and** that rate is at least 20 percent higher than the 13-week average for the same period in both of the past two years.

The trigger levels are calculated and monitored by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), which notifies the Governor and the Employment Security Department. In January 2009, Washington was notified that it met the conditions of Option #1 beginning Feb. 15, 2009.

In May, after the state’s seasonally adjusted, three-month average unemployment rate reached 8 percent, eligible claimants could receive up to seven additional weeks of extended benefits – **for a total of 20 weeks.**

Extended-benefits application process

Employment Security automatically notifies all potentially eligible claimants about how to apply. People who do not receive an extended-benefits application in the mail can get one from a local WorkSource office or by calling the Extended-Benefits Office (877-558-8509). An online system is not available for **initial** extended-benefits applications, and Employment Security cannot accept faxed applications. However,

In 2009, extended benefits are paid 100% by the federal government for most employers

people can file their **ongoing, weekly** claims for extended benefits on the Internet (www.esd.wa.gov), by telephone (800-318-6022, option 1) or on paper.

Funding, payouts and eligibility for extended benefits

Funding for extended benefits is usually a 50/50 split between the federal government and the state, so that half of each week's extended benefits come from the state's unemployment trust fund. **But for 2009, the federal government is paying 100 percent of extended-benefit costs for taxable employers.**

The weekly extended-benefit amount is the same as people received on their regular unemployment claims. Claimants receiving extended benefits are required to make more-rigorous work-search efforts. They also must be willing to accept work that pays at least as much as their weekly unemployment benefits. Denials of extended benefits are appealable.

Total unemployment benefits potentially available

Currently, most eligible unemployed workers in Washington could receive up to 79 weeks of unemployment benefits if the various economy-related requirements exist. Here's how it potentially adds up.

Up to 79 weeks of unemployment benefits currently available

Benefit program	Time available: Up to...
Regular unemployment benefits	26 weeks*
Emergency unemployment compensation (all states)	20 weeks*
Emergency unemployment compensation (states with 6% three-month average unemployment rate)	13 weeks*
Extended benefits (first trigger: option #1 or #2 above)	13 weeks*
Additional extended benefits (8% three-month average unemployment rate)	7 weeks*
TOTAL	79 weeks**

* In effect in Washington when fact sheet was published.

** The numbers in the chart assume that a worker receives his/her maximum weekly benefit, is not subject to a cap on base-period wages and is not qualified for a special program (e.g., Trade Act).

Eligible workers who are accepted into the Training Benefits Program could receive up to another 26 weeks of unemployment benefits, which are paid after emergency unemployment compensation and before extended benefits.

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