
Puerto Rico Natural Disaster Unemployment News

As a result of a succession of earthquakes and aftershocks that initially occurred December 28, 2019, the president has made a Major Disaster Declaration. The declaration was made on January 16, 2020 for Adjuntas, Arecibo, Cabo Rojo, Ciales, Corozal, Guanica, Guayanilla, Hormigueros, Jayuya, Juana Diaz, Lajas, Lares, Las Marias, Maricao, Mayaguez, Morovis, Orocovis, Penuelas, Ponce, Sabana Grande, San German, San Sebastian, Utuado, Villalba, and Yauco municipalities.

As of February 6, 2020, nine more municipalities were added: Arecibo, Ciales, Hormigueros, Juana Díaz, Las Marías, Mayagüez, Morovis, Orocovis and Sabana Grande.

Filing Details:

- Deadline to file is Tuesday, March 3, 2020
- Individuals whose employment has been affected should apply for DUA by:
 - Calling 787-945-7900 or 787-395-7328, Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4:00 pm AST
 - Visiting the Dept of Labor's Bureau of Employment Security (BES) unemployment local office nearest to your home or at the American Job Center (AJC) in your area, between 8 am to 4:30 pm AST

What is Disaster Unemployment Assistance?

Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is a partnering program between the USDOL and FEMA to provide funds to state UI agencies for the payment of UI benefits under certain circumstances. It provides disaster unemployment assistance to individuals who have lost employment as the result of a major disaster and are NOT otherwise eligible for regular UI benefits.

Individuals are eligible if they lived, worked, or were scheduled to work in the affected areas and:

- No longer have a job or place to work; or
- Cannot reach the place of work; or
- Cannot work as the result of damage to the place of work; or
- Cannot work due to injury sustained in the disaster
- Became the breadwinner or major supporter of a household due to the death of head of household resulting from the disaster

DUA benefits are only payable during the Disaster Assistance Period (DAP) and shall not exceed 26 weeks. The weekly benefit amount for which the person may be eligible is determined by the governing laws in the state in which the claim was filed. Any benefits claimed under the DUA program are 100% federally funded which means employers' UI accounts will not be charged. While employer non-charging is determined by each state unemployment agency.

What is Required to File?

DUA applicants will need their Social Security Number and the name and address of their last employer or prospective employer to file for DUA. Applicants are required to provide proof (at the time of filing or within 21 days of filing their DUA claim) that they were employed or self-employed at the time the disaster occurred or were scheduled to begin (or resume) a job or self-employment when the disaster occurred. A copy of the most recent federal income tax forms or check stubs may also be required (self-employed individuals should also provide Schedules SE and Schedule C or Schedule F.)