

F-E-I-N: NYS Labor Commissioner Reardon announces directive requiring employers to provide information New Yorkers need to apply for unemployment benefits

Missing or incorrect federal employer identification number is primary reason unemployment applications cannot be processed

Every business must provide employees with NYS employer registration number, federal employer identification number, and full employer name and address

New York State Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon on Wednesday announced the New York State Department of Labor has directed all New York-based employers to proactively provide New Yorkers with the information they need to file for unemployment benefits. In a directive sent to over 320,000 businesses, the DOL reminded employers of their legal obligation to provide employees with their employer's New York state employer registration number, federal employer identification number (FEIN), and full employer name and address.

The Department of Labor has identified missing or incorrect FEINs as the No. 1 reason New Yorkers' unemployment benefit applications cannot be immediately processed. Once that information is provided via a phone call, DOL can complete the claims process

"Applying for unemployment benefits can seem daunting and overwhelming, especially during a public health crisis, and we all have a responsibility to help ease the burden on New Yorkers who are out of work," Reardon said. "The No. 1 reason New Yorkers' applications are incomplete is because they are missing federal employer identification numbers – and today we are reminding businesses they are legally required to provide this information, so former employees can easily file complete applications and access the benefits they deserve."

When applying for unemployment benefits – including both tra-

ditional unemployment insurance and pandemic unemployment assistance – New Yorkers are asked for information to identify their former employer, which is used to validate an individual's wage history. This includes their former employer's federal employer identification number and the business entity's formal, legal name.

While this information is included on New Yorkers' tax forms, including their W2, many people do not keep it readily available – evidenced by the fact the DOL has identified a missing or incorrect FEIN as the top reason New Yorkers' unemployment applications cannot be processed. When an unemployment application contains a missing or incorrect FEIN, it is marked by the DOL's system as "partially-complete," and requires a phone call between the applicant and a DOL representative to resolve.

Under New York state labor law, employers are required to provide this information to employees upon the termination of their employment. In the directive sent to over 320,000 New York-based businesses, the DOL reminded businesses of this legal obligation and provided an easy-to-complete form that they can use to communicate the information going forward. In addition, the DOL directed employers to proactively provide this information to employees who have already lost their jobs due to coronavirus-related impacts.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, the Department of Labor has received and processed 1.4 million completed unemployment benefit applications and distributed over \$3 billion in benefits. In addition, the DOL has launched a "tech surge"

to increase its capacity to serve New Yorkers and rolled out a streamlined application that allows individuals to seamlessly apply for either traditional unemployment insurance or pandemic unemployment assistance.

Reardon said, "As you know, our nation has seen an unprecedented increase in unemployment claims, following this public health crisis and every state is struggling to handle this deluge. In fact, before this crisis, the single highest number of unemployment insurance claims filed in one week – nationwide – was 695,000 claims filed in October of 1982. But during this crisis, we have seen weeks with 4.4 million, 5.2 million, 6.6 million, and 6.8 million claims in a week. The volume is simply heartbreaking."

"Here in New York, we are working faster and more aggressively than other states our size to connect New Yorkers with their benefits – and in just six weeks, we have delivered over \$3 billion in benefits to more than 1 million individuals."

She added, "We are also doubling-down on proactive communication to New Yorkers about the quickest way to receive their benefits. That includes reminding individuals that the fastest, most reliable way to receive your funds is by direct deposit into an existing checking account. Any New Yorker who is currently receiving benefits on a KeyBank debit card can switch to direct deposit by going to our website at labor.ny.gov, clicking on unemployment services, clicking on update your personal information, and clicking on update – register for direct deposit. That is the fastest way to get your money."

Higgins: Federal grants available to support local fire departments

Congressman Brian Higgins encouraged local professional and volunteer fire departments to apply for new federal fire grants made available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act approved by Congress on March 27.

Higgins said, "The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is designed to support community readiness in response to emergencies. The impact of the coronavirus outbreak puts a new strain on

our first-responders. This emergency funding provides necessary resources to support protective equipment and supplies."

The CARES Act included \$100 million in COVID-19 supplemental funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program. This is in addition to and separate from the \$350 million appropriated in 2019 for AFG. A new application window for COVID-19-related requests is open, with all applications due before 5 p.m. Friday, May 15.

FEMA lists the purchase of personal protective equipment, such as eye protection, isolation gowns, protective coveralls, gloves, respirators and face masks, as the primary funding priority for these grants. Additional supplies may be eligible under the grant, but considered lower priority. For more information, visit www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/187460. Departments with questions can contact the help desk at firegrants@fema.gov.

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