

**Employment Security Department
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Dec. 18, 2007
07-101**

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Disaster unemployment benefits now available in Mason, Pacific, Thurston counties

OLYMPIA – People who live or work in Mason, Pacific and Thurston counties are now eligible for disaster unemployment benefits if they lost their jobs or cannot work because of the storms and flooding that struck Western Washington earlier this month.

Disaster unemployment benefits are only for people who do not qualify for regular unemployment benefits. These include people who were injured in the storm, who are self-employed, who were prevented from beginning new work or who became head of their household due to a death caused by the disaster.

To qualify for disaster benefits, people must be out of work as a direct result of the storm. The following examples constitute “direct result of the storm.”

- The person’s place of employment was physically damaged or destroyed.
- The person cannot get to work because it is inaccessible, either because roads are closed or the business is closed.
- The person’s employer or business loses work because it received the majority of its revenue from another entity that was damaged or destroyed in the storm.

Affected workers are eligible to receive disaster unemployment benefits beginning Dec. 2 and should apply for benefits right away. Workers will not receive their first checks until the state receives the money from the federal government, which can take three to six weeks, but payments will be made retroactively.

The deadline to apply for benefits is based on when counties are added to the federal disaster declaration. Lewis and Grays Harbor were the first counties identified, so workers in those counties have through Jan. 14, 2008 (extended from the original due date of Jan. 9 by the federal Department of Labor), to apply for disaster unemployment benefits. Because they were added to the declaration at a later date, workers in Mason, Pacific and Thurston counties have through Jan. 18 to apply.

Applications are available online at www.dua.go2ui.com, by phone at 877-416-7274, by e-mail at dua@esd.wa.gov or in person at local WorkSource centers. Qualified applicants will be eligible to receive \$165 to \$515 per week in benefits.

People who do not qualify for disaster unemployment benefits may apply for regular unemployment insurance online at www.go2ui.com or by phone at 800-318-6022.

The Employment Security Department administers the federal disaster-benefits program for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

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