



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 11, 2020

Contact:

Melanni Rosales

OED_Communications@oregon.gov

503-949-1851

Oregon Employment Department Takes First Step to Providing Lost Wages Assistance Benefits

September 11, 2020 (SALEM, ORE.)—Today the Oregon Employment Department launched online self-certification for the Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program, a temporary emergency measure that gives an additional \$300 per week to people out of work due to COVID-19 and who receive unemployment benefits. To meet FEMA requirements, claimants seeking LWA benefits must certify that they are receiving unemployment benefits for COVID-19-related reasons.

“Today, we are able to share a bit of positive news: Claimants eligible for LWA can now self-certify for these benefits online, ensuring they’ll receive LWA payments in the coming weeks. After a stressful week for Oregonians, on top of nearly six months of stress and uncertainty, we are glad to have launched the program that will allow us to get these urgently needed benefits out,” said David Gerstenfeld, acting director of the Oregon Employment Department.

Starting today, claimants can self-certify for LWA using the [Online Claims System](#). Soon, certification may also be completed over the phone; however, we strongly urge claimants to self-certify online if they can, to avoid long hold times and delays in getting through.

Oregonians automatically qualify for LWA if they:

- Have received unemployment benefits from July 26, 2020, through September 5, 2020; and
- Self-certify they are unemployed or partially unemployed due to disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Self-certification is a new step for claimants currently receiving regular unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and Extended Benefits (EB). Individuals receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) do not need to certify because they certified when first applying for PUA benefits.

LWA is retroactive to eligible claimants for weeks ending:

- August 1, 2020
- August 8, 2020
- August 15, 2020
- August 22, 2020
- August 29, 2020
- September 5, 2020



FEMA has confirmed that LWA ends with the benefit week ending September 5, 2020. Because the funds provided by FEMA were limited, the Employment Department cannot extend payments beyond that date. If individuals become unemployed after the week ending August 1, 2020, they can only receive LWA for weeks when they qualify for unemployment benefits *and* meet LWA eligibility requirements.

The Department plans to start providing LWA funds to qualified Oregonians by the end of September. LWA payments are taxable under federal law, just like regular unemployment insurance (UI) or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. If taxes are withheld from other benefits, they will also be withheld from the LWA benefits.

###

Equal Opportunity program — auxiliary aids and services available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Contact: (503) 947-1794. For people who are deaf or hard of hearing, call 711 Telecommunications Relay Services.