



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 6, 2021

Media Contact:

OED_Communications@oregon.gov

Oct. 6 Oregon Employment Department Media Statement

Our next media briefing is scheduled for 1 p.m., Wed., Oct. 20.

Helping Oregonians Get Back to Work

Through ongoing Return to Work efforts, WorkSource Oregon centers refer people to jobs, connect job seekers to resources that reduce barriers to returning to work, help people explore career options and training opportunities, assist with iMatchSkills® and work search requirements, and more. Here are just a few highlights for this week:

- “[Hiring Heroes for Healthcare in Oregon](#),” is a statewide virtual job fair that occurred today, Wed., Oct. 6. Nearly 50 employers participated in the event and it was promoted nationally to recruit talented health care professionals to come, live and work in Oregon.
- A [multiple-employer job fair](#) is scheduled from 3 to 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 8, at the Salem KROC Center.
- Apprenticeships lead to high-paying jobs, and there is a great demand for workers in construction fields. An apprenticeship virtual webinar for Jackson and Klamath counties is scheduled for 9:30 – 10:15 a.m., Friday, Oct. 8, 2021. [Registration](#) is required.
- Drive-thru [job fair hiring events](#) are scheduled Oct. 20-21 for job seekers in Clatskanie, Rainier and Vernonia.

Employer Payroll Tax Break

The Employment Department has notified businesses that were initially determined as eligible for the pandemic-related employer payroll tax relief provided by HB 3389, which passed earlier this year.



The state is rolling back employers' UI tax experience ratings for years 2022 through 2024 to the tax ratings they had pre-pandemic 2020. This means employers' UI tax experience rates (benefit ratio) will be based on their experience rate prior to the pandemic, offsetting any increases they would otherwise have experienced due to safety measures they took to keep customers and employees safe from the virus.

Employers who meet [all conditions](#) of the relief plan are eligible to defer up to one-third of their 2021 UI taxes until June 30, 2022, without accruing interest or penalties on the deferred amount.

Economic Update

When federal pandemic-related unemployment benefits expired on Sept. 4, about 81,000 people in Oregon saw their unemployment benefits end. This includes about 49,000 workers whose Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) claims ended, and about 32,000 whose Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits ended.

Workers whose PEUC claims ended had jobs with a payroll employer prior to the pandemic. By contrast, about four out of five PUA claimants were self-employed (not on an employer's payroll) before the pandemic. For the workers whose PEUC benefits ended in September, the largest group, at 8,400, had jobs in Oregon's hotels, restaurants, and bars before becoming unemployed. Healthcare and social assistance and retail trade were the next largest groups, at about 6,000 each.

There's been some speculation that the end of federal pandemic unemployment benefits would also mark the end of recent labor shortages in Oregon and across the U.S. However, even though these benefits ended, it's [still likely to be difficult for employers to hire](#) as many workers as they'd like to in the coming weeks and months. Some industries have bigger job deficits to overcome than others.

For example, the accommodation and food services industry is about 35,000 jobs below its pre-recession jobs level. So, even if each of the 8,400 claimants who lost their PEUC benefits went back to payroll jobs in hotels, restaurants, and bars, it would only fill 24% of the industry's gap to a full jobs recovery.

Another challenge specific to accommodation and food services is that [many workers moved on to other industries](#). Nearly 37,000 of the people who worked at Oregon's hotels, restaurants, and bars between January and March of 2020 had moved on to a job in a different industry by the winter of 2021. That's a concern for an industry rapidly trying to recover jobs lost to the pandemic.



Another 36,000 former accommodation and food services workers were no longer found working for any payroll employer in Oregon, and they weren't on a UI claim either. These workers likely either moved out of the state, or they dropped out of the labor force. There are many reasons someone may be out of the labor force, including retirement, going back to school, health concerns amid an ongoing pandemic, child care or self-employment constraints.

Research from the Employment Department, a [prominent academic study](#), and [private-sector findings](#) all suggest that a combination of ongoing COVID-19 concerns, increasing retirements, and other labor force factors are contributing to continued worker shortages.

Listening Sessions on Temporary Availability Rule

On Sunday, Sept. 26, temporary changes to the “able and available to work” requirements for people claiming unemployment insurance (UI) benefits expired, as it was 90 days after the COVID-19 emergency declaration periods ended.

This means people filing for initial and weekly claims for benefits must now be able to work and available for suitable work for at least 40 hours per week **or** one shift per day, if their work is shift based.

To better reflect the current workforce and economy, the department has put into effect a new temporary rule to expand eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits for people who may have barriers preventing them from returning to their work, such as caring for a sick family member or a lack of child care.

Under the temporary rule, people in these circumstances may still be eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits if they are available to accept work at least one shift per day or 40 hours per week. This may require people to seek a different type of job, but one they have the skills and experience to do.

The department has scheduled six listening sessions for businesses, workers, community organizations, and others to give feedback on these new temporary rules before any permanent changes are made to the availability rule. Listening session dates and times are posted on the [unemployment.oregon.gov](https://unemployment.oregon.gov/webinar-page) [webinar page](#). Simultaneous interpretation will be available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian and Cantonese.

There are two possible benefits with this change. First, it may help provide economic stability to local communities where there is a large number of people whose work schedules have been restricted by the pandemic, including those with underlying health conditions who may need to limit their exposure to COVID-19.



Second, it may provide workers, who are unemployed through no fault of their own, greater access to unemployment insurance (UI) benefits; replacing part of the worker's lost income and helping people reenter the workforce in a sustainable way.

We are notifying claimants to make sure people know about this rule change. They may also visit our online Temporary Eligibility Rule [FAQs](#) for more information.

Deadline for Retroactive Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Claims

The deadline to retroactively file online an initial claim or claim past weeks of benefits is 11:55 p.m., today, Oct. 6. Those needing assistance should use the [online interactive tool](#).

Last week's statistics

- Last week we paid about \$26.5 million in benefits to 32,000 Oregonians.
- From Sept. 28 – Oct. 1, 2021, the Department answered 92.4% of calls in under 15 minutes. Of these, 79.6% were answered in under five minutes.

###

Equal Opportunity program — auxiliary aids and services available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Contact: 971-673-6400. For people who are deaf or hard of hearing, call 711 Telecommunications Relay Services.