

April 9, 2020 | 3:30 pm

Information on Novel Coronavirus

Governor Cuomo has put NY State on PAUSE: All non-essential workers are directed to work from home, and everyone is required to maintain a 6-foot distance from others in public.

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Facing Unprecedented Spike in COVID-19 Related Unemployment Insurance Applications, NYS Department Of Labor Announces Partnerships To Boost Tech Capacity and Make It Easier for New Yorkers To File

“Tech Surge” includes Critical Upgrades from Google, Deloitte, and Verizon

New Yorkers Who Had Been Told to Call Department of Labor Should Stop — They Will Receive a Call from New York State within the next 72 Hours to Complete Their Application

Online Unemployment Insurance Application Will Go Offline Today from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM — Will Be Rebooted with New, Streamlined Application System

New Yorkers Urged to Use New Online Application System, Which can Handle Most Applications from Start to Finish Without a Telephone Call

Department of Labor’s Online Systems Now Supported by Over 60 Web Servers, up from just 4 Before COVID-19 Crisis

Call Center Now Open 7 Days a Week, with 1,000 Staff Answering Phones and Processing Claims and Plans to Add an Additional 1,200 Staffers

Every New Yorker Eligible for Unemployment Insurance will Receive Their Entire Benefit, Even if Their Filing is Delayed

Albany, NY (April 09, 2020) - Facing an unprecedented spike in unemployment insurance applications related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the New York State Department of Labor and the New York State Office of Information Technology Services today announced a “Tech Surge” in partnership with Google Cloud, Deloitte, and Verizon to improve the reliability of the state’s online and telephone-based unemployment insurance application systems. The Tech Surge will include critical upgrades to the Department of Labor’s technology systems that will increase its capacity to accept and process applications, making it easier for New Yorkers to apply for benefits.

Importantly, the Tech Surge will include a new, streamlined, and more reliable online application system – which will be available at labor.ny.gov. New Yorkers are urged to use the new online system, which can handle most applications from start to finish, dramatically reducing the number of New Yorkers who must speak to a claims specialist on the phone.

In addition, the Department of Labor will roll out a new “call back” system, allowing their staff to proactively call New Yorkers who need to submit additional information to support their existing unemployment assistance application. This means New Yorkers who have already filed partial claims

under the old system and had been told to call the hotline to finish their application should not — instead, the DOL call center will call these New Yorkers directly.

In order to launch the new, streamlined application system, New York State's online unemployment insurance application will go offline today between 5:00 PM and 7:00 PM to be rebooted.

"I recognize that this is an extremely challenging time for all New Yorkers," **NYS Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon said**. "I have been unemployed. I understand the urgency. We want you to be aware of the steps that we are taking to respond to each of you, as quickly as we can. We know that your livelihood depends on it and we assure you that you will get your benefits."

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the New York State Department of Labor's unemployment insurance filing system has faced an unprecedented increase in volume — with peak weeks seeing a 16,000% increase in phone calls and a 1,600% increase in web traffic, compared to a typical week.

The Department of Labor Tech Surge is providing critical upgrades to New York State's unemployment insurance filing system during this crisis. These efforts are expected to increase capacity and reliability. Specific actions include:

- **Google Cloud** has worked with the State Office of Information Technology Services to create a more user-friendly, streamlined, and reliable unemployment insurance application for the Department of Labor. The online application will shut down from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM today to transition to this new streamlined application. Specific upgrades include:
 - Leveraging Google Cloud's infrastructure to increase reliability and allow the application to scale, so it can handle a high volume of users;
 - Allowing users to save an incomplete application and pick up where they left off;
 - Providing an "every device experience," so New Yorkers can file from smartphones, tablets, and laptops; and
 - Streamlining the number of questions so the application is shorter and easier to understand.
- **Deloitte** is opening an additional unemployment insurance call center staffed by hundreds of experienced customer service professionals, which will dramatically increase the number of calls that can be handled; and
- **Verizon** is expanding the number of phone "ports" for the Department of Labor's call center from 1,750 to over 10,000 by the end of this week - increasing the center's call capacity.
- **The Department of Labor** will begin rolling out a "call back" feature which allows state representatives to call New Yorkers with incomplete unemployment insurance applications and finish their applications over the phone. This means those who fully complete their claim online will NOT need to call the state themselves. New Yorkers who had previously been told to call the hotline should not — instead, the DOL will call them to complete their application. To prevent fraud, state representatives will verify their legitimacy by providing New Yorkers' claim type and filing date.

In addition, the Department of Labor has:

- Drastically expanded the call center's hours, including opening on Saturdays and Sundays:
 - Monday - Friday: 8:00 AM to 7:30 PM
 - Saturday and Sunday: 7:30 AM to 8:00 PM
- Increased the number of servers that support the online filing system from 4 to over 60;
- Implemented a new, more efficient filing system based on the first letter of the applicant's last name (alphabetical order):
 - A - F : Monday
 - G - N : Tuesday
 - O - Z : Wednesday
 - Missed your day: Thursday through Sunday
- Streamlined the claims process, automating additional processes and reducing the situations in which a filer has to call and speak with a representative; and
- Dedicated 1,000 staff to the Department of Labor's unemployment insurance Telephone Claim Center — compared to roughly 400 who typically staff the call center — with plans to bring an additional 1,200 staff on board, including those at the new Deloitte call center.

Last week, the Department of Labor also launched a new **PSA** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZ4QNYyg5dc>) that provides information on how to apply for unemployment benefits and reassures New Yorkers that if their unemployment filing is delayed, they will still receive full unemployment benefits. The PSA is also available with Spanish subtitles [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEeexjCkX8s&feature=youtu.be) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEeexjCkX8s&feature=youtu.be>).

In addition, earlier this week Governor Cuomo **announced** (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/amid-ongoing-covid-19-pandemic-governor-cuomo-directs-flags-be-flown-half-mast-honor-those-we>) he had directed the Department of Labor to immediately make \$600 in additional weekly unemployment benefits available to all New Yorkers. The additional benefits were included in the Federal CARES Act, but, unlike other states, New

York began delivering the extra unemployment insurance to unemployed individuals before Federal funds are disbursed to the states. New York is also extending the period covered by unemployment benefits for another 13 weeks, for a total of 39 weeks.

The New York State Department of Labor is dedicated to ensuring that every New Yorker who is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits will receive all benefits due. New Yorkers seeking to file an unemployment insurance claim should visit labor.ny.gov or call the Telephone Claim Center at (888) 209-8124. Below are some resources that will assist New Yorkers in filing their claims:

[Unemployment Insurance FAQs \(/ui/pdfs/ui-covid-faq.pdf\)](#)

[What You Need to Know and Do About the CARES Act \(/ui/cares-act.shtm\)](#)

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