



## USING THE ATTACHED WORKER CLAIMS FILING PROCESS\* In the Event of a Natural Disaster

### **Should or can I apply for unemployment benefits as a courtesy to and on behalf of my employees?**

It depends on the situation. These situations could impact your entire workforce, or only a portion of your workforce. They could relate not only to whether or not work you have work available for the employee, but also to circumstances **they** may be encountering as a result of a disaster.

North Carolina provides two methods for filing claims.

1. Employees may file for themselves, electronically or by phone. In situations where this is possible, this is considered the preferred best practice. It allows them to access their individual portal for information, messages, and updates, as well as completing ongoing weekly recertification.
2. In situations where an employee may have limited accessibility and means to file for themselves, (no power, internet, or phone service) an employer can elect to file on the employee's behalf using the **Attached Worker** claims filing process. Weekly recertification by the employer, to include wages earned for any hours worked, is required to keep this process in effect.

TIP: To eliminate duplicate filing, you may want to reach out to an employee prior to filing on their behalf to confirm whether or not they have completed this process on their own.

### **Does this process differ in the event of a natural disaster than in other situations where filing for unemployment may apply?**

Yes. There are important differences you need to know about when using the Attached Worker claims process in the event of a natural disaster designation:

- The decision of whether or not paid accrued time-off (vacation, sick, PTO, or other forms of accrued paid leave) is paid out is the decision of the employer. When filing, any wages paid out must be reported in the week they are received. If you are paying out these wages, doing so **before** beginning the filing process for DUA will help prevent delays in eligibility.
- The customary "one week waiting period" does not apply.
- Employers may file Attached Claims for a period of more than six weeks (the customary limit) of benefits for Attached Claims.
- Employers must continue to recertify Attached Claims weekly for employees to continue receiving benefits.
- Employers may submit an Attached Claim for an employee for more than one lay-off event in a year.

- An employer is not required to pre-pay the cost of unemployment benefits for their employees at the time the Attached Claim is filed.
- Employers do not need to have a positive credit balance with DES to file Attached Claims.

**How are unemployment benefit amounts calculated? What can an employee expect in benefit payments each week they have not worked at all, and what happens in those weeks they are able to work part time?**

The information below provides a general guideline for determining benefit eligibility amounts. When reviewing this information keep in mind that being eligible to collect unemployment is not guaranteed and factors such as, but not limited to, [reported earnings by multiple employers, previous unemployment benefits that may have been collected, the reason the employer has no work, or has limited work, and the reason the employee is unable to work] can affect benefit eligibility and benefit amounts.

- An employee's UI benefit amount is determined by wages reported in the last two completed quarters of the base period, which is the first 4 of the last 5 completed quarters. The weekly benefit amount is computed by dividing the total wages in the last two quarters of the base period by 52. The minimum benefit amount is \$15.00; the maximum benefit amount is \$350.00.
- If an employee works some during a week while drawing UI, all reported earnings (which could include hourly wages, paid-out PTO, etc.) equal to or less than 20% of a claimant's weekly benefit amount will not reduce the amount of benefits paid. All reported earnings over 20% of the weekly benefit amount will reduce the benefit payment dollar for dollar. All reported earnings equal to or over the benefit amount will result in no benefits for that week. The number of hours themselves have no bearing on benefit eligibility, only the reported wages.
- Weekly benefit eligibility is affected or eliminated [during a week in which an employee works while collecting benefits] based solely on the earnings reported, not the number of hours worked during the benefit week.
- As of October 16, 2024, depending on the circumstances and impact for individuals and areas affected by Hurricane Helene, an additional \$250.00 may be added to the amount of unemployment compensation received, up to a maximum of \$600.00 weekly.

\* The information provided here is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or guaranteed claims handling from any federal government agency. Each case is fact specific. You should consult a qualified attorney or appropriate government agency for specific legal questions or concerns.

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