

Federal Extension of Emergency Unemployment Compensation Benefits

Frequently Asked Questions

Since 2008, federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) benefits have been available to eligible U.S. Virgin Islanders. These extensions were made possible by multiple acts of Congress, including the recent passage of the Middle Class Tax Relief Act, signed by the President on February 22, 2012. The current legislation gradually reduces the maximum number of weeks that are payable, through December 2012.

How does this affect me?

Any claimant receiving EUC benefits will no longer receive any benefits after December 29, 2012. EUC claimants, who are currently receiving EUC benefits, may continue to receive benefits until they are exhausted or until December 29, 2012, whichever comes first. There will be no phase out period. If claimants have not exhausted their current tier and are receiving benefits for that tier, they will no longer receive a benefit check after December 29, 2012. This will change only if new legislation to extend EUC is enacted.

How will the ending of the EUC program affect the dislocated HOVENSA workers?

Once legislation does not change, dislocated HOVENSA workers will only be eligible to receive the one-time 26 week unemployment benefit allotment. However, all HOVENSA workers dislocated on February 20, 2012 or later are asked to come to the Virgin Islands Department of Labor's office to see a NEG (National Emergency Grant) representative to inquire about training or other program offerings as allowed under the NEG grant.

What action do I need to take?

EUC claimants have always been required to actively seek work and keep detailed work search records. Under the new legislation, there is an increased effort on work search and re-employment services. No other action needs to be taken at this time. If you are not receiving EUC benefits and believe you are eligible, please come by the Department of Labor to apply. Claimants currently reenrolled in the EUC program will receive official notification of this change from the department through the mail and public broadcasts. Claimants are encouraged to check the department's website at www.vidol.gov for continuous updates.

What services are available to me?

The Department of Labor offers job placement and referrals as well as job services and training assistance. We encourage you to come into the department to become familiar with our menu of self or staff assisted services. Our support services are designed to assist individuals who are having a difficult time returning to work.

Who is eligible for EUC benefits?

Currently unemployed individuals who satisfy all of the following criteria could qualify:

- had an unemployment application in effect as of May 5, 2007, or later;
- have exhausted all regular state UC benefits;
- have no rights to regular UC or extended benefits under any other state unemployment compensation law or federal law or in Canada.

What are individuals eligible for?

Individuals may be eligible to receive EUC benefits, which are offered in stages known as “tiers.” Each tier must be exhausted before the next tier may begin. Here would be the maximum course of benefits, in order of payment:

- Regular UC (state-funded by employer contributions) – up to **26 weeks**
- Federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) – up to **37- 53 weeks**
(this depends upon timing of available tiers)

EUC Tier 1 **reduced from 20 weeks to 14 weeks**

EUC Tier 2 **14 weeks, no reductions**

EUC Tier 3 **reduced from 13 weeks to 9 weeks**

EUC Tier 4 **increased from 6 weeks to 10 weeks**

I think I am eligible for EUC benefits. What do I do?

If you are receiving regular UC benefits, you must exhaust those benefits before you can receive emergency unemployment benefits. For as long as the EUC program remains in effect, the Office of Unemployment Insurance will send you a written notice alerting you when your regular UC benefits are about to expire. This notification can be found on your biweekly certification including instructions to come into the office to file for federal EUC benefits.

How long will it take to process my application and start benefit payments?

Once you are determined to be eligible for EUC, payments will be issued on a biweekly basis

What will be the amount of my EUC benefits?

The EUC weekly benefit amount will be the same as the individual’s regular UC benefit amount, unless there is some other change in circumstances (such as an adjustment in deductions, like child support, overpayments or partial earnings). Individuals will be expected to make the same work search efforts as regular UC in addition to meeting all work search requirements.

How may I file continued claims of extended benefits?

Once a favorable determination has been made, benefits will continue as normal.

How long does the EUC program last?

As currently legislated, the EUC program is scheduled to phase out over time. The last week that any of these federal EUC benefits can be paid is the week ending **December 29, 2012**. No federal EUC benefits will be paid after that time (unless legislation changes).