

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE NOW AVAILABLE TO
HURRICANE DENNIS VICTIMS

~ Deadline for applying August 14, 2005 ~

TALLAHASSEE- Susan Pareigis, Director of Florida's Agency for Workforce Innovation, announced today that individuals who have lost jobs or businesses as a result of Hurricane Dennis may be entitled to Disaster Unemployment Assistance benefits. On July 10, 2005, President George W. Bush, in response to a request from Governor Jeb Bush, declared a major disaster for Bay, Escambia, Franklin, Gulf, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Wakulla, and Walton counties, clearing the way for use of federal funds to provide assistance to individuals affected by the disaster.

Although many workers will be covered by the state's regular unemployment compensation program, those not covered may apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA). This is a federally funded program, which assists individuals who become unemployed as a direct result of a declared disaster and who do not qualify for regular unemployment benefits. The program also covers self-employed individuals, owners of farms and ranches, farm and ranch workers, as well as fishers and others who are not normally covered by state unemployment compensation.

The Agency for Workforce Innovation administers the DUA program in Florida in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor and state and regional workforce boards. Funding for the program is provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Applicants must file for disaster benefits within 30 days of the date of public notification. Therefore, DUA applications must be filed no later than August 14, 2005. To be eligible for either the regular state unemployment compensation program or DUA, the applicant must be a legal resident. To be eligible for DUA benefits, an individual must have exhausted all entitlement to any regular state unemployment benefits and must have been working in or residing in a county for which the disaster has been officially declared. DUA benefits are available to unemployed individuals for up to 26 weeks from the date of the disaster declaration. The 26-week assistance period for Hurricane Dennis ends January 14, 2006.

Federal regulations provide that the unemployment of an individual is caused by a disaster if the individual: (1) becomes unemployed as a direct result of the disaster; or (2) is unable to reach the place of employment as a direct result of the disaster; or (3) was scheduled to begin work and does not have a job or is unable to reach the job as a direct result of the disaster; or (4) has become the major support for a household because the head of the household

has died as a direct result of the disaster; or (5) cannot work because of an injury caused directly by the disaster.

Individuals applying for disaster related unemployment assistance will need to have the following information available:

- Social Security number
- Alien registration number and expiration date (if a non-U.S. citizen)
- Name and address of most recent employer(s)
- If self-employed have proof of self-employment for the past two years
- (State or Federal tax returns, financial statements, bank records of accounts, or 1099 Forms. Documentation necessary to support a claim may be faxed to 850-921-3938. Applicant's Social Security number should appear on all documents submitted)

If scheduled to begin work but could not work due to the disaster, have name and address of employer and the date work was scheduled to begin

Beginning Monday, July 18, 2005, applications for DUA may be filed by Internet at the following web site address: www.fluidnow.com (indicate on the application that it is a disaster related unemployment claim). Telephone applications may be filed by calling 1-800-204-2418. Hours of operation are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM EST, Monday through Friday.

The Agency for Workforce Innovation is the lead state workforce agency and directly administers the state's Labor Market Statistics program, Unemployment Compensation, Early Learning and various workforce development programs. The Office of Early Learning, a division within the agency, provides oversight of Florida's school readiness programs and is the lead entity for implementing the state's Voluntary Prekindergarten program.

Workforce development policy and guidance in Florida is provided by Workforce Florida, Inc. Workforce Florida and the Agency for Workforce Innovation are partners in the Employ Florida network which includes 24 Regional Workforce Boards who deliver services through nearly 100 One-Stop Career Centers around the state.

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