

› Coronavirus unemployment update

On Sunday, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine announced he will be issuing an executive order to make changes to the unemployment system to help mitigate the impact of the novel coronavirus on individuals and businesses that are impacted by quarantines, closures and reductions in work hours.

This order will also give relief to applicants who are not offered paid leave through their job, as well as those who have been quarantined by a medical professional, their employer, or whose employers must temporarily close. Those who apply for unemployment under these circumstances will be exempt from the requirement that they be actively seeking work.

Ohio employers planning layoffs or shut-downs as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic need to provide the following mass layoff number to their associates to expedite the processing of unemployment benefits – Code: 2000180.

Questions and Answers:

1. Will workers qualify for unemployment benefits if the coronavirus (COVID-19) causes the employer to shut down operations?

An executive order issued by Governor DeWine expands flexibility for Ohioans to receive unemployment benefits during Ohio's emergency declaration period. Unemployment benefits will be available for eligible individuals who are requested by a medical professional, local health authority, or employer to be isolated or quarantined as a consequence of COVID-19, even if they are not actually diagnosed with COVID-19. In addition, the waiting period for eligible Ohioans to receive unemployment benefits will be waived.

2. If an employer lays off employees due to the loss of production caused by the coronavirus, will the employees be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits?

Yes, if the employees are otherwise eligible. An executive order issued by Governor DeWine expands flexibility for Ohioans to receive unemployment benefits during Ohio's emergency declaration period.

3. If an employee receives unemployment benefits as a result of a coronavirus-related business shutdown, will the employer's unemployment taxes increase?

For contributory employers, charges during Ohio's emergency declaration period will be mutualized. Reimbursing employers will follow existing charging requirements under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4141.

4. If an employee receives unemployment benefits as a result of a coronavirus-related business shutdown, can the benefits be charged to the mutual account?

Yes, an executive order issued by Governor DeWine allows unemployment benefit charges to be mutualized for contributory employers. In addition, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services will waive penalties for late reporting and payments during Ohio's emergency declaration period.

5. If an asymptomatic employee imposes a self-quarantine because of the coronavirus, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?

In most cases, no. Unemployment benefits are available to individuals who are totally or partially unemployed due to no fault of their own. In this example, the individual-not the employer-is choosing not to work and, therefore, would be ineligible. However, the facts of each circumstance are important. If the employer allowed this individual to telework, they would not qualify for benefits because they would not be unemployed. If the employer required the individual to stay home but did not offer telework, the individual might be eligible for benefits if they met the monetary and weekly eligibility criteria.

6. If an employee is in mandatory quarantine because of suspicion of having the coronavirus, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?

Yes, an executive order issued by Governor DeWine states that employees who are quarantined are considered to be unemployed.

7. If the coronavirus creates a situation that causes an employer to submit quarterly reports and/or payments late, will the filing deadline be extended?

Yes, an executive order issued by Governor DeWine waives penalties for late reporting and payments during Ohio's emergency declaration period.

Questions about COVID-19? Visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call **1-833-4-ASK-ODH** for answers.

Questions for CareWorks Comp? Email us at unemployment@careworkscomp.com.