

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Trump Extends Unemployment Benefits For Virgin Islanders Out Of Work As Direct Result Of Hurricane Irma Or Maria

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President Donald Trump on October 5 signed into law the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018, Public Law 115-254, which extended the duration of Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) for an additional 26 weeks for eligible individuals unemployed as a direct result of the major disasters that were declared due to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Hurricane Irma was declared for the U.S. Virgin Islands on September 7, 2017. Therefore, persons who were directly affected by Hurricane Irma may be eligible if they

remained unemployed between March 11, 2018 to September 7, 2018 due to Hurricane Irma, according to a release issued by the Department of Labor.

Hurricane Maria was declared for the U.S. Virgin Islands on September 20, 2017. Therefore, persons who were directly affected by Hurricane Maria may be eligible if they remained unemployed between March 25, 2018 to September 18, 2018 due to Hurricane Maria.

In collaboration with the Office of the Governor, Department of Labor Commissioner Nominee Gary Molloy, on Monday informed residents of the territory who became unemployed as a direct result of Hurricanes Irma and or Maria and remained unemployed, that they will now be able to take advantage of the extended disaster assistance period, if all eligibility requirements are met. Once a claimant returns to work, eligibility to the DUA benefits may end.

Eligibility is based on the following criteria:

1. Individuals who have exhausted Disaster Unemployment Assistance claims and remained unemployed as a result of the disaster.
2. Individuals who have exhausted regular Unemployment Insurance claims and Extended Benefits claims and remained unemployed as a result of the disaster, even if they did not apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance during the original Disaster Assistance Period.
3. Individuals who had a lapse in continued claim filings and remained unemployed as a result of the disaster, if the reason for the lapse is not disqualifying (e.g., the lapse didn't result from the individual returning to suitable work).
4. Individuals who have never applied for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (for reasons other than collecting regular Unemployment Insurance benefits or Extended Benefits during the original disaster assistance period) if they can show good cause for the late filings.

The Virgin Islands Unemployment Insurance Agency notified the public that a registration package and notice of eligibility will be mailed out beginning today, to relative claimants, who may qualify for the extended Disaster Assistance benefits. According to the release, individuals who receive a package must complete the application and return it to the Unemployment Insurance office along with all supporting documents requested. Once the application is processed, the individual will receive an appointment date. Walk-ins and new applications will be accepted, and will be reviewed before processing to determine eligibility, the release said.

For St. Thomas and St. Croix claimants, unemployment insurance representatives will be available at normal locations 2353 Kronprindsens Gade, St. Thomas, and 4401 Sion Farm Ste. 1, St. Croix Mondays through Fridays from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. For St. John claimants, an unemployment insurance representative will be available in Cruz Bay at the St. John Battery on Monday and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

According to the release, applicants no longer residing in U.S. Virgin Islands will receive an application by mail, or if no application is received claimants may call 340-715-5712. Information is also available on the department's website at www.vidol.gov

Mr. Molloy advised that eligible individuals will have until May 24 to file an initial application and continued claim certifications for Disaster Unemployment Assistance.

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