



**FARMERS AFFECTED BY
HURRICANES MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR
DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT
ASSISTANCE, NOV. 30 DEADLINE
LOOMS**

Farmers who are unable to pursue their livelihoods due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita may be eligible for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA). This program is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and administered by each state's department of labor.

Farmers Legal Action Group Senior Staff Attorney Karen Krub explains the difference between this program and standard unemployment programs: "Disaster unemployment provides temporary financial assistance to individuals, including farmers, who are unable to work as a result of a major disaster declared by the President and who would not qualify for standard unemployment benefits."

Disaster Unemployment Assistance covers:

- Self-employed persons whose business was lost or suffered a substantial interruption of activities as a direct result of the disaster
- Persons who are unable to work due to injury directly resulting from the disaster
- Persons who have become the major supporter of their households due to the death of the head of the household directly resulting from the disaster
- Persons who cannot reach their place of employment due to the disaster
- Persons who were scheduled to start work but no longer have a job as a direct result of the disaster

Benefits are paid on a weekly basis, and are available for a maximum of 26 weeks after the date the disaster was declared; for Hurricane Katrina this would be late February 2006. The amount of the payment is based on the individual's income for the prior tax year, and the benefit must be at least half of the state's average weekly unemployment benefits.

Changes have been made to make the program more accessible for people affected by the recent disasters, explains Krub. "Normally, Disaster Unemployment Assistance applications are due within 30 days after a state announces that DUA is available. However, because of the magnitude of damage caused by the hurricanes and the large number of people affected, the U.S. Department of Labor announced on September 26 that the filing deadline has been extended to November 30 for those affected by Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita."

**Disaster Unemployment Assistance
applications require:**

- Social Security number
- Proof of earnings, typically a 2004 tax return

If the required documents are not available when the claim is filed, or were destroyed as a result of the disaster, farmers can follow up with the required documentation within 90 days.

Farmers are therefore advised to submit requests for copies of their tax returns as soon as possible to ensure that they will have the needed information within the deadline for receiving benefits.

Farmers who need to obtain a duplicate copy of their tax returns for their application and other assistance may obtain a copy directly from the Internal Revenue Service by submitting IRS Form 4506, "Request for Copy of Tax Return." This form is available from the IRS Web site at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f4506.pdf> or by contacting the IRS Disaster Assistance Hotline at 1-866-562-5227.

The IRS is waiving the fee for taxpayers affected by the hurricanes. If you are requesting a duplicate tax return write the words “Hurricane Katrina” or “Hurricane Rita” in red at the top of the form. The form includes instructions for mailing it to the correct IRS regional office.

For more information on disaster assistance available to farmers visit www.farmaid.org.



To file for Disaster Unemployment Assistance, farmers should contact their state agency handling such claims.

State of Alabama
Department of Industrial Relations
1-866-234-5382

State of Louisiana
Department of Labor
1-800-430-8076
www.LAWORKS.net

State of Mississippi
Department of Employment Security
1-888-844-3577
www.mdes.ms.gov

State of Texas
Texas Workforce Commission
1-800-939-6631
www.twc.state.tx.us/ui/uiclaim.html