

SHUT-DOWN OF FEDERAL OPERATIONS—WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME?

In the event of a Federal government shutdown, Federal employees may be eligible for Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE). The UCFE program is administered by state unemployment insurance (UI) agencies acting as agents of the Federal government. The program is operated under the same terms and conditions that apply to regular state UI. In general, the law of the state in which an individual's official duty station in Federal civilian service is located will be the state law under which an individual's eligibility for benefits is determined.

What is a shut-down?

Every year Congress appropriates funds for Federal Agencies to operate in each fiscal year. In the absence of either a signed appropriations or a Continuing Resolution, Federal Agencies must "shut-down" (that is, cease normal spending).

Which federal employees are affected?

When there is a "shut-down" not all government operations cease. Expectations generally provide for continuation of activities involving national defense, law enforcement, and other activities directly involved with the protection of life and property. In addition, employees not paid from appropriated funds, and those "excepted" to administer shut-down operations, will continue to work.

Pay Status

During a government shut-down, employees who are not required to work under one of the exceptions above may not even volunteer their services. Employees not required to work are "furloughed," that is, placed in a non-pay, non-duty status, until the shut-down ends.

Will "excepted" employees get paid?

Employees designated "excepted" who continue to work during the shut-down will almost certainly be paid for this period. However, this requires specific Congressional approval and that has occurred in the past.

Am I eligible for unemployment benefits?

State UI laws regarding eligibility vary. You may apply on or after the first day you are furloughed. The state where you file your claim will determine your eligibility. In general, furloughed employees should be eligible as long as all other state eligibility factors are met.

How do I file an unemployment claim?

You need to contact the state where you worked to file a claim. To find contact information for your state, please visit the following website:
<http://www.servicelocator.org/>

What information will I need to file for unemployment?

Generally, employees will need to provide the state a Standard Form 8, Notice to Federal Employee About Unemployment Insurance (SF-8); or a Standard Form 50, Notification of Personnel Action (SF-50). The SF-50 can be downloaded from the Electronic Official Personnel Folder (e-OPF) located at <https://eopf.nbc.gov/dol/>. The SF-8 is issued by Human Resources. Employees are also encouraged to print their latest earnings and leave statements from <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/epps/>.

What is the weekly amount of UCFE benefits paid, and how long do benefits last?

Most states pay a maximum of 26 weeks of regular benefits; the maximum weekly benefit amount of UCFE is based on the state law; the amounts will vary.

How soon will benefits begin to be paid?

Some states require individuals to serve a waiting week, which means that the first week after a claim is filed is an unpaid week. In general, most states will issue payments to eligible individuals within 14-21 days after the claim is filed.

What will happen if Federal employees are paid for time during the shutdown period?

Should an appropriation or continuing resolution occur that retroactively provides for the payment of salary, state and Federal UI laws governing benefit overpayments will need to be applied to those weeks in which benefits were paid.