

Unemployment Benefit Extensions and Supplemental Benefits in Minnesota

Current law limits most applicants to 26 weeks of regular unemployment benefits. Both the state and federal government, however, have provided additional benefits under special circumstances. The following information highlights those additional unemployment-related benefits.

General extension provisions available under state and federal law

Both state and federal law contain provisions that allow for additional unemployment benefits to be paid under special conditions. The federal-state extended benefit program provides up to 20 weeks of extended benefits when the unemployment rate in a state exceeds thresholds specified in federal and state law. Up to 13 weeks of extended benefits become available in Minnesota under the following conditions:

1. If in any week and the preceding 12 weeks, the rate of insured unemployment: (a) is 6 percent or more; or (b) is 5 percent or more and at least 120 percent of the average of the rates in the corresponding 13-week period in each of the two prior calendar years; or
2. The U.S. Secretary of Labor determines that the state's average rate of seasonally adjusted unemployment (in the most current three-month period for which data is available) is 6.5 percent or more and at least 110 percent of the rate in the corresponding three-month period in either of the prior two calendar years

Another seven weeks of extended benefits become available to eligible workers when the state's unemployment rate reaches 8 percent. The availability of extended benefits ceases when the state's unemployment rate falls below the threshold amounts explained above.

Additional state benefits

In addition to the general provisions available under state and federal law, up to 13 weeks in additional unemployment benefits are available in Minnesota if:

- at a facility with at least 100 employees, the employer lays off at least 50 percent of the workforce in a one-month period;
- the employer has no plan to resume operations leading to the reemployment of the laid-off workers in the immediate future; and
- the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the county where the facility is located was at least 10 percent during the month of the layoffs or during the three months before or after the month in which the reductions were made.

However, any other special state or federal benefits (other than regular benefits) are deducted from the total additional benefits available under this provision.

The legislature has historically provided special benefit provisions for particular workers. The following table shows instances where the legislature has granted these additional unemployment benefits to laid-off workers of particular

companies, even though the mass layoff and county unemployment rate requirements described above were not satisfied.

Special Legislative Grants of Additional Unemployment Benefits

Year	Company	Additional weeks of benefits	Training requirement
1998	Hibbing Taconite	13 weeks	No
2000	Eveleth Taconite	13 weeks	No
	Hennepin Paper	26 weeks	Yes
2001	LTV Steel	26 weeks	Yes
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmland Foods • Fingerhut (St. Cloud, Mora, or Eveleth locations) • Named airlines (See Laws 2002, ch. 380, art. 1, § 5) 	13 weeks	Yes
2007	Ainsworth Lumber Co. (Bemidji, Cook, and Grand Rapids)	13 weeks	Yes
2008	Ainsworth Lumber Co. (Cook)	Extended through 12/27/2008, if benefit entitlement exhausted after 1/1/08	No

Additional federal benefits

Emergency Unemployment Compensation and Benefit Extensions. In response to economic conditions, Congress occasionally authorizes special additional benefits and extensions of unemployment benefits. For example, in 2008, Congress authorized and then subsequently updated a federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) program that provided additional federal benefits for individuals who exhausted their regular benefits and remained unemployed. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the federal stimulus bill enacted in February 2009, authorized a \$25-per-week benefit increase and exempted up to \$2,400 of unemployment insurance benefits from federal income taxes in 2009. Federal law also provided COBRA premium payment assistance to unemployed persons. Up-to-date information on special benefits and benefit extensions is available at www.uimn.org.

Federal Trade Readjustment Allowances. Under federal law, Trade Readjustment Allowances provide income support to persons who have exhausted their unemployment benefit entitlement and were laid off or had hours reduced by their employer as a result of increased imports from other countries. Benefits under this program include job training, job search, and relocation assistance.

Federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Disaster Unemployment Assistance provides financial help to workers whose employment was interrupted or eliminated as a result of a disaster declared by the president. To be eligible for these benefits, a worker cannot be eligible for regular unemployment benefits.

Disaster employment assistance is available beginning with the first week following the beginning of the disaster and ends 26 weeks after the president’s disaster declaration.

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