



NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: John Carpenter, Public Information Officer ♦ Phone: (405) 557-5469 ♦ Fax: (405) 525-0139
E-mail: john.carpenter@oesc.state.ok.us ♦ Web: www.oesc.state.ok.us

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FORMER UNITED DESIGN WORKERS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR TRADE ADJUSTMENT BENEFITS

Special Status Granted to Laid-off Company Employees Under Trade Act of 1974

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK – Displaced workers of United Design (The Encore Group) in Noble, Okla. have been declared eligible for the Trade Readjustment Assistance (TRA) program by the U.S. Department of Labor. TRA provides additional unemployment benefits to those who lose jobs or a significant number of work hours because of increased imports or a shift in production out of the country. The goal is to help laid-off workers return to suitable employment as quickly as possible.

A recent U.S. Department of Labor ruling found that former United Design workers meet all requirements to receive TRA according to the Trade Act of 1974 (19 USC 2273). Workers must meet three criteria to qualify: (1) they must be laid off or threatened with layoff; (2) employer sales or production must have decreased; and (3) increased imports of products like or directly competitive with products made by the firm must contribute to layoffs or the threat of layoffs. Workers must also be enrolled in training either eight (8) weeks after certification or 16 weeks after their last qualifying separation, although the state can waive this requirement in special cases.

The ruling also found former United Design workers are eligible for Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA). This program for workers 50 years of age and older provides an alternative to regular TRA benefits. ATAA allows older workers, for whom retraining may not be suitable, to accept reemployment at a lower wage in return for a wage subsidy.

The USDOL report concludes “all workers of The Encore Group, United Design Division, Noble, Oklahoma, who became totally or partially separated from employment on or after January 25, 2005, through two years from the date of certification, are eligible to apply for adjustment assistance...and are also eligible to apply for alternative trade adjustment assistance...” The first day of eligibility (date of certification) is February 3, 2006. Separated employees who would like to take advantage of this assistance should contact their nearest Workforce Oklahoma Center at 1-888-980-WORK (9675).

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