



NEWS RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATE AGENCY TO EXPAND HOURS, OFFER ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMANTS

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK (January 15, 2009) – Beginning next Tuesday, Oklahomans receiving unemployment benefits will have new options for getting help with their unemployment claims. Due to a dramatic increase in the number of claims filed, the state unemployment call center has been overloaded with calls, resulting in long wait times and busy signals. Those who file online have experienced similar delays. Recognizing that this places our customers in a difficult situation, the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) will implement measures aimed at addressing these issues on Tuesday, January 20, 2009.

The first of these measures is expanding the hours at the unemployment call center from 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8:00 a.m. until noon on Saturday. In addition, initial unemployment claims will be taken at selected local workforce centers, giving claimants the opportunity to schedule an appointment to file a claim in person. Many Workforce Oklahoma centers will also provide a local person to help claimants with unresolved issues and questions. All of these measures will go into effect on Tuesday, January 20, 2009. Although this should help ease congestion, it is not expected to completely eliminate it, and OESC asks for our customers' continued patience as we work through these issues.

"The increase in unemployment claims has been overwhelming," said OESC Executive Director Jon Brock. "We appreciate the patience of our customers as we take advantage of every opportunity to provide the timely service they deserve."

UI claimants looking to take advantage of these services can reach their nearest Workforce Oklahoma center at (888) 980-WORK (9675) to get more information or schedule a time to come in. OESC reminds the public that the fastest way to file your claim is still either online or through the unemployment call center, even with extended wait times. To file online, claimants can visit www.unemployment.ok.gov. The unemployment call center can be reached at 525-1500 in the Oklahoma City calling area or (800) 555-1554 outside of Oklahoma City.

In addition to the previously mentioned measures, OESC has hired 18 new customer service representatives at

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OKLAHOMA EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION NEWS RELEASE

the call center and is in the process of hiring 32 more. The agency has also added phone lines at the center and upgraded the agency's computer system so more claims can be filed at one time.

About OESC – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission is Oklahoma's state workforce agency. OESC provides unemployment compensation to support unemployed workers and their communities; matches jobs and workers to benefit local labor markets; prepares a skilled workforce to meet employers' needs; and gathers, analyzes and disseminates information about the labor force to improve local economic decisions.

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