

An update on Lost Wages Assistance

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 25 September 2020 05:15

ALBUQUERQUE — Lost Wages Assistance payments are coming to an end for New Mexicans.

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions began processing payments to unemployed workers under the federal Lost Wages Assistance program Sept. 3. New Mexico was one of the first states to apply and be approved for the LWA grant when it was announced four weeks ago.

Funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, LWA provides \$300 per week to supplement unemployment benefits to individuals that meet the eligibility requirements of receiving at least \$100 in unemployment benefits per week and self-certifying that they are unemployed, or partially unemployed, as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Mexico received funding for five weeks covering July 26 through Aug. 29. An eligible claimant could receive up to \$1,500 in a separate payment from their weekly benefit amount.

On Sept. 16 the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions announced that FEMA had notified them that Sept. 5 would be the last week of the LWA benefits program due to the fund's depletion. The sixth and final week of LWA payments began going out the week of Sept. 14. NM DWS cannot extend LWA payments beyond that date.

NMDWS will continue to pay eligible claimants for the approved six weeks for as long as existing FEMA funds are available. Claimants will continue to receive normal weekly benefit amounts for any benefit weeks for which they are eligible.

LWA is one of six programs NMDWS is currently administering. Since March 15, the agency has paid a total of more than \$2 billion in assistance to more than 200,000 New Mexicans.

Other provisions of the federal act do not expire until Dec. 26. This includes Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, which provides an extra 13 weeks of benefits to persons who exhaust regular state benefits, and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, which

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provides up to 39 weeks of benefits to individuals who are self-employed or do not otherwise qualify for state benefits.

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