

The Montana Unemployment Insurance Division is experiencing a backlog in the processing of claims. A number of factors have contributed to this workload. Since July 2008, Congress has approved four Federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation extensions and an additional State extended benefits program to address the high rate of unemployment in the United States. Montana has triggered onto the State Extended Benefit program twice since July of 2008. In addition, new legislation provided for an alternate base period, expanded eligibility for part-time workers and additional approval of training for the unemployed workers. These changes have all been good for the unemployed workers of Montana who have needed the benefits. However, they have all compounded the workload issue for UI the past few years. UI is a very complicated program. To enact these changes we have completed the required planning, programming, staff training, forms revisions, extensive fact-finding, rule changes, and customer education; all in our highest workload of record.

To help alleviate the frustration of trying to reach the Unemployment Insurance Telephone Centers, Unemployment Insurance Division has expanded access to a variety of methods. In addition to our Claims Processing phone numbers at (406) 444-2545 or (406) 247-1000, customers may file online at mt.gov, contact us by email at [UI4U.mt.gov/Ask UI](mailto:UI4U.mt.gov/AskUI), fax us at (406) 444-2699, or mail us at Montana Department of Labor and Industry, PO Box 8020 Helena MT 59604.

In addition we have hired 42 temporary claims processing staff to assist UI customers with their claims.

This is an extremely challenging time for unemployment insurance customers. Our customers need the help that unemployment insurance is intended to provide and they have valid and necessary questions and concerns. We have dedicated staff serving them with customer service while getting their claims filed, processed, and paid. Even though the economy is beginning to see some improvement, the Unemployment Insurance Division is still experiencing an extraordinarily heavy workload which is delaying the processing of claims. We recognize the effect these delays have on our customers and their families, and continue to assess our processes and procedures to find more ways of helping