



BHR Bulletin, WORK SHARE UPDATES

Updated February 8, 2021 (scroll down)

OED Letters Regarding Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

Some City employees recently received a letter from OED stating their regular unemployment insurance claim is being adjudicated -- and that applications for the PUA program must be received by December 26, 2020. **We have been advised by OED that this letter, which was automatically generated, does not apply to most City employees and can be disregarded.** If you received this letter, were denied Work Share benefits for a particular week, and would like to know if you qualify for PUA, please refer to OED's FAQ on the PUA program here: <https://unemployment.oregon.gov/frequently-asked-questions#faqTopic-2008>.

Waiting Week Payments

It has been reported in various news media that the Oregon Employment Department (OED) will begin to make "waiting week" benefit payments to unemployment recipients this week. This is true, but for Work Share participants, this payment will likely come later. Each waiting week claim for Work Share participants must be keyed manually, which will take additional time. OED has indicated they are actively working on this project, and their goal is to have all waiting weeks paid by the end of January. OED has also indicated that the \$600 CARES Act benefit should still be paid to anyone whose waiting week falls between May 31 and July 25. The \$300 Lost Wages Assistance Program benefit should be paid to anyone whose waiting week falls between July 26 and September 5.

OED Adjudication (Judgment) for Missed Opportunities to Work

If you were ineligible for Work Share benefits because of missing an opportunity to work (sick time, vacation time, funeral leave, etc.), you may get a phone call from an Oregon Employment Department (OED) adjudicator to verify the reason for your absence. If you receive a call, you will be asked to confirm what day(s) you missed work, why you missed work, and when you returned to work. The adjudicator will use this information to make a final determination on your eligibility for benefits. If the adjudicator leaves you a message, **you must return their call within 48 hours** or they will make a decision without your input.

Lost Wages Assistance

On August 8, 2020, the President made available up to \$44 billion from FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund to provide financial assistance to people who have lost wages due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This temporary emergency program, known as the Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program, gives an additional \$300 per week to people who have had a reduction in work hours due to COVID-19, and are receiving at least \$1 of unemployment benefits. This is effective from

July 26 through September 5, 2020. LWA will be paid retroactively to Work Share participants in the same manner as their regular Work Share weekly benefits but as a separate payment.

City of Portland has certified to OED that the need to reduce hours and subsequent participation in Work Share was due to a disruption from COVID-19. Employees do not need to take any action themselves, to receive this additional retroactive payment for weeks they were eligible for Work Share benefits between July 26 and September 5.

Note: Many employees have received a letter from OED indicating they have not yet certified to be eligible for LWA on their unemployment insurance claim, and they must certify within 5 days.

We have been in communication with OED and they have confirmed that the City did certify on your behalf, but that OED did not follow through on marking all City employees as being certified.

OED is now working their way through the City's list of Work Share participants and marking them as certified for LWA.

You do NOT need to self-certify within 5 days of the date in the letter. This issue will be corrected by OED on your behalf. You do not need to repay any LWA benefits already received unless you receive future communication from OED asking you to do so (for example, if OED determines you were paid LWA benefits in error).

Processing

OED is still processing claims, so it is common for Work Share participants to be missing payments. If you email the Work Share inbox regarding missing payments, please include your furlough dates, the number of payments received, and the weeks listed on any paper checks. If you received a letter regarding the waiting week, please include the date listed. All this information will help us assess which payments are being processed.

ReliaCard

All employees who receive a Work Share benefit will receive a US Bank ReliaCard. Typically, this should arrive in the mail within 10 days after you receive a check for your first week of benefits. Be sure to activate the card and keep it in a safe place. More information about ReliaCards and how to use one can be found in this [detailed FAQ](#).

OED has been working on setting up direct deposit for City employees who submitted direct deposit authorization forms. If you requested direct deposit, be sure to check both the balance on your ReliaCard (you can create a user account on the [ReliaCard website](#)) **AND** in your bank account. For Reliacard, you can sign up for text and email alerts to let you know when new funds have been deposited.

For questions and issues related to ReliaCard, please call Cardholder Services at 866-567-8590, or visit www.usbankreliacard.com.

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1099-G Tax Information for Work Share Benefits

All employees who received Work Share (or regular unemployment) benefits in 2020 should receive a 1099-G -- reporting the amount of benefits you received, and any taxes withheld. The form was mailed to the address Oregon Employment Department (OED) has on file, and is postmarked no later than January 31, 2021. If you do not receive your 1099-G soon, call 503-947-1800. [There is a general FAQ page here.](#) The FAQ on this topic is called *“Will I receive a year-end statement to file with my taxes?”*.

CARES Act Extension

Our understanding of the CARES Act Extension recently passed by Congress is that employees who have a valid Work Share claim between Dec. 27, 2020 and March 13, 2021 will receive a supplemental weekly benefit of \$300, in addition to their Work Share benefit. OED is working to get these new benefits to employees as soon as possible. Currently, OED is waiting to receive rules and instructions from the Department of Labor. Until that information is received, OED cannot give the City a date as to when supplemental benefit payments will be issued. The City will continue to send in weekly claim certifications to OED, and once everything is finalized, the additional payments will be reviewed and issued by OED.

If you have questions regarding Work Share benefits or the process, please email Inboxworkshare@portlandoregon.gov.

Read a detailed [FAQ regarding the Work Share program](#).