

Unemployment Insurance Claimant Handbook



labor.alaska.gov/unemployment



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

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INTRODUCTION

You are responsible for reading and familiarizing yourself with this handbook. Many of the questions you may have are answered in this handbook. If your question is not answered here, please visit our website at labor.alaska.gov/unemployment. You will find links for additional information as well as division contacts that will help you with your Unemployment Insurance (UI) questions. The information in this handbook is based upon, but does not replace, Alaska Statute (23.20) and Title 8, Chapter 85, (8 AAC 85) of the Alaska Administrative Code.

Program Integrity

Program integrity is the number one focus of the Unemployment Insurance program. Our goal is to improve program integrity by reducing improper payments. You are required to provide the department with timely, accurate and complete information in order to determine or reexamine eligibility for any claim or audit conducted by the division or its representatives.

Fraud

Alaska law imposes severe penalties for attempting to collect benefits to which you are not entitled. For UI purposes, fraud is knowingly making a false statement, misrepresenting a material fact or withholding information to obtain benefits. You will be required to repay the benefits. You may also have to pay a penalty equal to 50 percent of the benefits that were paid to you as a result of the misrepresentation. Additionally, present and future benefits may be withheld. All fraud cases are subject to criminal prosecution, fines and imprisonment.

If you suspect a business or an individual is committing fraud, please contact us by email at uifraud@alaska.gov; fax at (907) 269-4835; or phone at (907) 269-4880 or toll free at (877) 272-4635.

GENERAL

Benefit year

A “benefit year” is typically 52 weeks following the effective date of your claim. The effective date of your claim is Sunday of the week in which you file.

Amount/duration of benefits

The maximum weekly benefit amount in Alaska is \$370. The minimum weekly benefit amount is \$56. Your claim is based on wages paid to you in the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters from when you file your claim. (See diagram below.) If you do not qualify for a regular base period claim, you may be eligible for an alternate base period claim. This uses wages earned in the last four completed calendar quarters from when you filed your claim.

If you have worked in another state during the benefit year, those wages may be requested to increase your weekly benefit amount, or you may choose to file for benefits with the other state. However, you may not file against more than one state at a time. The duration of benefits is 16 to 26 weeks, depending on the amount and distribution of wages paid in the base period.

Regular base period

Your base period is the shaded months.							
Oct Nov Dec	Jan Feb March	April May June	July Aug Sept	Lag quarter Oct Nov Dec	Jan Feb March	If your claim is filed in:	
	Jan Feb March	April May June	July Aug Sept	Oct Nov Dec	Lag quarter Jan Feb March	April May June	←
		April May June	July Aug Sept	Oct Nov Dec	Jan Feb March	Lag quarter April May June	←
			July Aug Sept	Oct Nov Dec	Jan Feb March	April May June	Lag quarter July Aug Sept
Prior Year	Last Year			Current Year			

Benefits are taxable

When you file your federal income tax return, you must report 100 percent of the benefits paid. We will send you form 1099G by Jan. 31. You can print your 1099G online through myAlaska, when available. Keep us informed of your current address in order to receive your 1099G.

You may request that 10 percent of benefits be withheld for taxes. You can start or stop tax withholdings when filing online, or call your UI claim center. We cannot refund any money withheld.

Social Security numbers

To protect your privacy, Social Security numbers are no longer displayed on documents mailed to you. A client ID number is displayed instead. Your social security number will still be used in correspondence with your former employer and shared with other government agencies such as Social Security Administration and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Dependents' allowance

You may be eligible to receive an additional allowance of \$24 per week per child, for up to three children. A dependent is your natural child, stepchild (by marriage), legally adopted child or court-appointed legal ward. Your dependent must be unmarried and under the age of 18, unless they have a permanent disability. You may be requested to provide documentation for dependent allowance eligibility.

A dependent must reside with you, or you must certify that you provided more than 50 percent of the dependent's support over the past 12 months or since the loss of custody. If you certify to providing more than 50 percent support, you may be required to provide proof. You can add a dependent to your claim anytime during your benefit year before exhausting your regular benefits. To add a dependent, call your UI claim center.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS and CLAIMANT RESPONSIBILITY

As a claimant filing for UI benefits, you are responsible for:

1. Registering for work as directed by your local state workforce agency.
2. Actively seeking suitable full-time employment.
3. Reporting weekly employer work search contacts.
4. Reporting all work activity and earnings for each week you file.

IMPORTANT: *U.S. Postal Service does not forward UI mail. It is your responsibility to maintain a current mailing address with our agency. You can update your address online while filing for benefits or call the UI claim center. Work registration requirements might change.*

Ready and able to work

You must be physically able and available to seek and accept suitable full-time work.

Should you apply for or be a recipient of Workers' Compensation or Social Security Disability, you must report this to your claim center as your UI benefits may be affected.

Employers and department staff must be able to contact you. You must have transportation (car, bus, etc.) and child care available.

You may not be considered available for full-time work if you are incarcerated or have legal restrictions. Incarceration is being confined in a correctional center, city jail or community residential center. Legal restrictions would include, but are not limited to, electronic monitoring or subject to third-party custody.

Suitable work means work you are suited for by experience or training that meets the prevailing wage and working conditions for your locality and is realistic to your labor market. You are expected to be flexible in your work search and to accept suitable work even

if the pay is less than you earned in your last job. Self-employment is not considered suitable work.

Registration for work

If you are in Alaska and you are instructed to register for work, **you must register for work and post a resumé online in the Alaska Labor Exchange System (ALEXsys)**. If you have already posted your resumé in ALEXsys, you must make sure it is current and accessible online. You must have a resumé posted online in ALEXsys within seven days of filing your new or reopened claim. It is your responsibility to check your resumé often and verify the date your registration will inactivate on the “My Resumés” page in ALEXsys.

Your registration and resumés stay active while you are engaged in job search and referral activities in ALEXsys and/or while receiving reemployment services from job service staff.

If you are a member of a dispatching union you must be in good standing and on the out-of-work list. If you are outside of Alaska, you must register with the local state workforce agency office or with the local chapter of a dispatching union. Proof of out-of-state registration may be requested.

To register for work in ALEXsys go online to **jobs.alaska.gov** or call your nearest job center.

Work search contact requirements

You may be required to search for work each week you file for benefits. Work must be suitable based on your skills and capabilities. To be considered valid, contact must be made with a person who has the authority to hire, using a method of contact appropriate for the occupation (i.e., in person, telephone, fax, mail, email or employer website). If you do not search for work each week, benefits may be denied.

For each work search you are required to report:

- date of contact,
- name of employer contacted and
- method of contact.

Report your work searches when filing on BIF or VICTOR. For more information on work searches, visit: **labor.alaska.gov/unemployment/work_search.htm**.

Reemployment Services

Reemployment Services is a program for job seekers who are seeking information that will lead to the rapid return to suitable work. Employment and training resources are available through the Alaska Job Center Network both online and from Alaska’s statewide job centers. If you are selected to participate in a Reemployment Services program, you must complete all requirements as instructed. Failure to do so may result in denial of your UI benefits.

Quit, fired, refused work

You must report if you quit your job, are fired or refuse work so a determination of eligibility can be made. Potential penalties include a six-week disqualification period beginning with the first week you are unemployed, plus a three-week reduction in benefits. You also may be ineligible for Extended Benefits. If you return to work during the six-week disqualification period, contact a UI claim center, as your disqualification may be lifted.

Attending school or training

You may be eligible to receive benefits while attending approved vocational or academic training. If you are enrolled in or attending school or training, report your school or training when you file your biweekly claim or call your UI claim center.

WORK, WAGES, INCOME

We compare what you report with other sources to verify accuracy. Refer to the section on Fraud (Page 4) for information relating to misrepresentation of work or earnings.

Work

Reportable work includes time spent on self-employment or volunteer activities as well as anything you do for wages, whether paid or not, during the seven days of the week you claim. Even if you are only working part-time or temporarily, all work and earnings, including tips, must be reported when you file your biweekly certifications.

Wages

Wages are any kind of payment you receive for the work you do, including room and board, goods, barter, tips, commission, stipend, honorarium, per diem, COLA, payment for jury duty, bonuses and back pay.

You must report your gross wages **earned** each week, Sunday through Saturday, whether or not you have actually been paid. Report the amount earned before any deductions are taken out (your gross pay). Report the employer's name and address, dates and number of hours worked per week, and your employment status.

If you are unsure of the number of hours worked or how much you earned, you can file up to seven days after the date you were paid. However, if you wait, you will need to call the UI claim center to file and report these wages, and your payment may be delayed.

When called to active duty, National Guard members must report encampments and wages earned. Do not report weekend drills.

If you are currently employed on an alternating or rotating work schedule – such as two weeks on, two weeks off – you may not be considered to be unemployed during your scheduled time off. Report your work schedule to your UI claim center.

How wages affect your benefits

You can earn \$50 without reducing your benefit payment, but you **must report** all the wages. Your benefit payment will be reduced by 75 cents for each dollar you earn over \$50. If you do not know how much you earned at the time you report, call the UI claim center within seven days with the correct wage amount. Reporting less money than you earned could result in an overpayment of benefits that you will have to repay.

Excess earnings

If you have gross wages equal to or more than $1\frac{1}{3}$ times your weekly benefit amount plus \$50, you will not receive a benefit payment for that week.

To locate your excess earnings amount, use your monetary determination or call VICTOR.

Other deductible income

When you are filing for benefits you must report the gross amount of any of the following payments: vacation, holiday, sick, pension, retirement, severance, commission, bonus, wages in lieu of notice and back pay awards. Changes in your gross pension amount must be immediately reported to the UI claim center. A deduction may be taken from your weekly benefits if you receive any of these payments. Social Security benefit payments are not deducted.

TRAVEL/RELOCATE

You must report all travel when filing for benefits. This includes any in-state travel. You are in travel status any time you travel outside the area in which you reside. You may be eligible while traveling if:

- You travel in search of work for up to four consecutive weeks. You must be legally eligible to accept work in the area of travel and actively search for work during each week you travel. Regulations do not allow for alternative work searches other than in person. Reasonable efforts to find work can be shown by making verifiable in-person contact with an employment service representative for the purpose of seeking work (e.g., two in-person employer contacts, in-person pre-arranged job interview or registering in person with the local chapter of your union).
- You travel to accept an offer of work beginning within 14 days of your departure.
- You travel to your home following discharge from the armed services.
- You were paid UI benefits the week prior to your travel, did not refuse an offer of work and you travel to:
 - obtain medical services, or accompany a spouse or dependent(s) to obtain medical services, that are not available where you

- live, on the advice of a health care provider.
- attend the funeral of an immediate family member for up to seven days.

If you travel or relocate outside the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands, you are not eligible to collect benefits.

WHEN TO FILE A NEW CLAIM or REOPEN AN EXISTING CLAIM

File a new claim immediately if you are:

- Separated (quit, fired, laid off) from work.
- Working on-call or part-time.

You must reopen your claim immediately if:

- You stop filing biweekly claims for any reason and want to start filing again.
- You move out of Alaska, move from one state to another or move from one area to another within a state.
- You travel in search of work for more than four weeks.

INFO YOU NEED BEFORE FILING

- Your Social Security number
- If not a U.S. citizen, your alien registration number, work permit type, passport number and expiration date
- Name of your last employer, mailing address and phone number
- Dates of employment
- Hours and gross wages earned in your last week you worked
- Gross amount of holiday, vacation, severance or bonus received the last week you worked
- If you worked for the federal government in the past 18 months you will need SF8 or SF50
- If you were active duty military in the past 18 months you will need copy 4 of your DD214
- Retirement information if currently receiving retirement payments

HOW TO FILE A NEW CLAIM or REOPEN AN EXISTING CLAIM

For the fastest service, apply online. Our online services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also call a UI claim center and speak to a claim technician from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. AST, Monday through Friday. (See phone numbers in the claim center addresses and phone numbers section of this handbook.) Claims are effective Sunday of the week in which you open or reopen.

To file on the Internet, log in to **my.alaska.gov** and click "View Your Services," then "Unemployment Insurance Benefits."

IMPORTANT: *To submit applications online you must read and certify as instructed and click "I AGREE" to complete the application process. Keep a copy for your records and comply as instructed, or benefits may be denied. The confirmation page will provide important links such as ALEXsys, direct deposit and work search log.*

myAlaska

You must use the same myAlaska account each time you access the UI website. If you previously registered with myAlaska to apply for your Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, or for other reasons, you may use the same account. Please store your myAlaska account information safely for future reference. To ensure your privacy and the security of your information, remember to logout of myAlaska when you finish your session.

IMPORTANT: *Whether filing online or by phone, you are responsible for the answers provided and payments made using your username, password and PIN. These electronic signatures have the same legal authority as your signature on paper. **Do NOT share your user name, password or PIN with anyone.***

FILING BIWEEKLY CLAIMS

Once you've opened a new claim or reopened an existing claim, you will be given dates as to when to file your biweekly claims. You must continue to file every two weeks to keep your claim active and to receive benefits. File within seven days after the last Saturday of your two-week claim period. Weeks that are filed late may be disqualified.

The first eligible week of a new claim is a "waiting week." You do not receive payment for this week. However, you must file to get credit for the week and meet the same requirements as any other week.

BIWEEKLY QUESTIONS

Each of the questions on the biweekly UI benefits application pertains only to the two weeks listed on the form. Depending on your answers, you may be asked additional questions or to complete a questionnaire.

- **Were you available and physically able to work full time each day?**
- **Did you miss work or refuse a job offer or job referral?**
If you turned down work or refused to be scheduled for work by an employer, answer yes.
- **Were you attending school or a training program?**
- **Did you travel or move to a different town?**
If you traveled outside the area in which you reside, traveled to accept a definite offer of work or if you relocated to a new town, answer yes.
- **Did you receive vacation, sick, retirement, bonus, holiday or severance pay?**
If you received any of the above payments report the income in the week it was received. Do not report Social Security. If you answer yes but do not report an amount, you will be advised to contact the UI claim center. Failure to contact the claim center as advised may result in the denial or late payment of your benefits.
- **Did you work for an employer, or were you self-employed?**

If you worked for an employer, you are required to report the amount you earned, hours you worked, the employer's name and address, and the last day you worked in the week you are claiming. You must report the wages that you earned in the week that you worked not when you are paid for the work. If you performed self-employment services, you must report the amount of hours you spent on your business and your net income.

- **Did you search for work?**

You are required to provide information on weekly work search contacts. (Please see work search contact requirements.)

How to report hours worked

When reporting your hours worked, or the hours you performed self-employment services, round down. For example, if you worked 3 hours and 45 minutes, enter 3 hours.

How to report gross wages

Your gross wage is the total amount you earned before any deductions have been made. You must report your gross wages earned each week, Sunday through Saturday, whether or not you have actually been paid.

Multiply the total amount of hours worked by the total hourly wage. Do not round down your hours worked for the purpose of calculating your gross wages. Report dollars and cents rounded down to the nearest lower penny.

For example: You worked 3 hours and 45 minutes in one week, and you earn \$10.25 an hour. Multiply total hours worked (3.75) by hourly wage (\$10.25) to obtain gross earnings (\$38.4375). Round hours down to nearest whole hour to report 3 hours; round wages down to nearest cent to report \$38.43.

How to report net income when self employed

To calculate your net income for the week, subtract your business expenses for that week from your total income earned for that week from your self-employment work.

If you did not and will not receive payment for the self-employment services, you must still report the hours you spent on your business.

How to report employment status

After reporting that you worked for an employer you will be asked about your employment status. You will be given the following options: laid off, working on call, working part time, quit or fired.

If you are a part-time or on-call employee and work 40 hours or more in a week, do not report your status as full-time.

Misreporting the status of your employment may result in a delay in payment.

Failing to report that you were fired or quit your job may result in the requirement to repay benefits paid to you in error, and you may be subject to penalties for fraud.

FILING ONLINE

The Internet is a quick and easy full-service way to file for benefits and manage your account. Log in to **my.alaska.gov**, and click "View Your Services," then "Unemployment Insurance Benefits."

INTERNET MENU

(Options may be different based on your claim status)

- File a new claim or reopen an existing claim
- File Extended Benefits (if available)
- File for biweekly UI benefits
- Current Claim Status and Work Search Requirements— shows last payment, current mailing address and account status
- Direct Deposit — start, change or verify direct deposit account
 - *If you cancel your direct deposit, you will be sent a debit card*
- Debit card Enrollment
- Debit card holder account information
- Help finding a job, ALEXsys
- 1099G Tax information (if available)

Helpful information

Changes to your mailing and/or physical address can be done online by completing a claim application; your registration requirements may be affected.



Help Icon will provide additional instructions and requirements.

IMPORTANT: *It is your responsibility to read all UI mail, and to contact the UI claim center any time you are instructed to do so. Failure to do so may result in denial of your UI benefits.*

PAYMENT METHODS

Payments will be automatically dispensed through a debit card unless direct deposit is established. Electronic payment is typically deposited within three business days of filing your biweekly certifications. You can sign up for direct deposit or a debit card online.

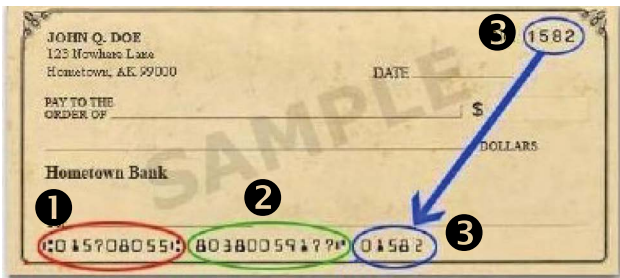
Debit card

Unless you establish direct deposit, a debit card and information packet will be mailed to you when you file a claim for benefits. Included in the packet is information on how to activate your card and contact numbers for customer service.

Direct deposit

You can set up, reactivate or cancel your direct deposit online by selecting "Direct Deposit," or you can call VICTOR and select option three (3). You will need the following information to establish direct deposit:

1. The routing number is 9 digits surrounded by |:
2. The account number (do not include hyphens or other special characters)
3. Do not enter the check number



IMPORTANT: Direct deposit is automatically suspended if it has not been used for a year or more. Your benefits will be issued by debit card until direct deposit is re-established.

FILING BY PHONE — VICTOR

If you are unable to file online, you can file by phone using the automated filing system VICTOR. VICTOR is not full service and available limited hours — Wednesday through Saturday, 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Alaska Standard Time (AST). For VICTOR phone numbers, see Page 22.

For access to convenient UI services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, visit our online Benefit Internet Filing (BIF) system through your myAlaska account. For additional help, contact your UI claim center Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. AST.

Information you need to file on VICTOR

- Your Social Security number
- Your self-chosen four digit PIN number
 - SETTING UP YOUR PIN: If this is your first time calling VICTOR and you have not set up a PIN, you will be prompted to enter a four-digit number of your choosing
 - You are responsible for the answers provided and UI payments made using your Social Security number and PIN
 - Do not share your PIN with anyone
 - If you have trouble setting up your PIN contact the UI claim center

IMPORTANT: If you hang up before VICTOR tells you your claim has been accepted, your answers will not be recorded and your claim will not be processed. You will need to call back and file again. If you are instructed by VICTOR to call the UI claim center, you must call within seven days. Your benefits will be denied if you do not contact the UI claim center as instructed. If you report less money than you earned, you will be required to repay the benefit amount and may be subject to penalties for fraud.

VICTOR menu

1. To file biweekly claims
2. For information about your claim
 - Payment status of weeks claimed — You will be given information about the last two weeks you claimed
 - Excess earnings amount
 - 1099G amount — the amount of benefits and withholdings reported to the IRS on form 1099G
3. Start, change or cancel direct deposit
 - Option to set up, cancel or confirm direct deposit to your personal bank account
 - Current status of debit card
 - You cannot cancel or request a debit card through VICTOR
4. Current mailing address
5. Change your VICTOR PIN
 - You may change your previously established PIN
 - When changing your PIN, choose a four-digit number you have not previously used
 - Once you set up your PIN it is in effect until you change it
 - If you do not know your PIN contact the UI claim center for assistance
6. Speak to a claim center representative

APPEAL RIGHTS

You may appeal any written determination that denies or restricts your benefits. You must phone, fax, mail or email your request for an appeal to

your UI claim center or an Appeals office within 30 days of the decision. (For contact information, see the *other UI contacts* section of this handbook.)

Appeals will schedule a hearing and mail a notice to you (contact Appeals if not received within 10 days). After the hearing, you will receive a decision in the mail. If you disagree with the decision, you have the right to further appeal.

- Continue to file your biweekly claims throughout the appeal process.
- If the decision goes in your favor, weeks which were not filed timely cannot be paid.

Per Alaska Statute 23.20.110(r), appeal hearing decisions are public information and are posted on the Internet at: uiappeals.labor.alaska.gov.

AUDITS

Quality Control Audit

Under federal requirements, your claim may be randomly selected at anytime and audited to make sure that all payments or denial of benefits have been made properly. All information you have provided is checked for accuracy. The examinations are thorough and may involve an interview with you and other interested parties. Failure to respond to a Quality Control audit request for information will result in a denial of benefits.

For more information, contact QC:

Email: dol.qc@alaska.gov
Website: labor.alaska.gov/qc/claimants.htm
Juneau: P.O. Box 115509
JUNEAU, AK 99811-5509
Phone: (907) 465-3000
Fax: (907) 465-2247
Toll Free: (800) 478-2999

UI Crossmatch

Crossmatch compares the earnings you reported with your employers' reports of earnings. This process discovers errors in reported earnings which may have resulted in a mispayment of benefits. This also is done for persons who may have worked in other states. If you fail to report earnings correctly, a 50-percent penalty may be assessed and future benefits denied.

OVERPAYMENT OF BENEFITS

Repayment

You are entitled only to benefits for which you are eligible. You must repay all benefits that are overpaid even if you were paid in error. Overpayments are legally enforceable debts. Payment arrangement can be made by contacting a Benefit Payment Control claims technician Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. AST, at (888) 810-6789 or (907) 465-2863 in Juneau.

EXTENDED BENEFITS (EB)

EB provides additional benefits during times of high unemployment for those who exhaust their regular benefits. These benefits are available only while this program is active. When the program becomes active you will be mailed EB instructions.

ALASKA JOB CENTERS

If you are interested in seeking work, job training or advancing in a career, check in with one of the Alaska job centers listed online at:

jobs.state.ak.us/offices/index.html
or call **(877) 724-2539**

CLAIM CENTER PHONE NUMBERS

If you need assistance regarding your claim, call the number closest to your community or visit us online at:

labor.alaska.gov/unemployment/ call-centers.htm

Anchorage UI Claim Center (907) 269-4700
Fairbanks UI Claim Center (907) 451-2871
Juneau UI Claim Center (907) 465-5552
Toll free for remote locations: (888) 252-2557
(888) 25CALLS
Fax (888) 353-2937 / (888) 35FAXES

Telephone hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Monday-Friday (except holidays).

VICTOR PHONE NUMBERS

Call the number closest to your community:

Anchorage (907) 277-0693
Fairbanks (907) 451-6126
Juneau (907) 586-4650

If you are located in a remote location that has been determined to be underserved for Broadband Internet service you may still have access to the toll-free number: (888) 222-9989.

OTHER UI CONTACTS

APPEALS

Email: appeals@alaska.gov
Website: labor.alaska.gov/appeals

Juneau: P.O. Box 115509
JUNEAU, AK 99811-5509
Fax: (907) 465-3374
Toll free: (800) 232-4762

BENEFIT PAYMENT CONTROL

Juneau: P.O. Box 115505
JUNEAU, AK 99811-5505
Phone: (907) 465-2863
Fax: (907) 465-6010
Toll Free: (888) 810-6789
Email: uifraud@alaska.gov
Website: [labor.alaska.gov/
unemployment/bpc.htm](http://labor.alaska.gov/unemployment/bpc.htm)

Anchorage: 3301 Eagle St., #205
ANCHORAGE, AK 99503
Phone: (907) 269-4880
Fax: (907) 269-4835
Outside Anchorage: (877) 272-4635

Fairbanks: 675 7th Ave., Station L
FAIRBANKS, AK 99701
Phone: (907) 451-2952
Fax: (907) 451-2883
Outside Fairbanks: (877) 272-4635

Relay Alaska for the deaf and hard of hearing:

*If you need assistance with your unemployment claim, dial **711** from inside Alaska or **(800) 770-8255** (toll-free) from outside the state.*

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Division of Employment and Training Services
P.O. Box 115509, Juneau, AK 99811-5509

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We are an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

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