



JB Pritzker, Governor  
Thomas D. Chan, Acting Director

# NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Rebecca Cisco | 217.524.1219  
[rebecca.cisco@illinois.gov](mailto:rebecca.cisco@illinois.gov)

## **IDES Taking Steps to Address Unprecedented Volume of Unemployment Claims** *Improved Processes to Help Streamline Increased Need for Benefits*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Today, Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) announced they are taking additional steps to address the unprecedented volume of unemployment benefit claims the department has fielded as a result of COVID-19.

To date, the department has taken several steps to improve the unemployment benefit claims process via the online portal and the call center.

- The website has been moved to new hardware infrastructure to handle the increased demand
- Web, storage, and processing capacity has been increased to meet needs of increased traffic
- Methods have been implemented to track COVID-19-related claims
- Call center capacity has been increased
- Daily call center hours have been extended to respond to those waiting in the queue after closure
- Call center staff has been supplemented by 40% to cut down on wait times
- Both the website and the call center will continue to be monitored for improvements in functions and abilities

In addition to these measures, IDES is now asking individuals to adhere to an alphabetized schedule when filing an unemployment benefit claim online and over the phone. This process mirrors other states, such as Colorado and New York, who are experiencing increased web traffic and high call volumes with their unemployment benefit systems.

### **Online Filing Schedule:**

- Those with last names beginning with letters **A-M** will be asked to file their claims on Sundays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays.
- Those with last names beginning with letters **N-Z** will be asked to file their claims on Mondays, Wednesday, Fridays.
- Saturdays will be available for anyone to accommodate those who could not file during their allotted window.

### **Call Center Filing Schedule:**

- Those with last names beginning with letters **A-M** will be asked to call on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 7:30am – 6pm.
- Those with last names beginning with letters **N-Z** will be asked to call on Mondays and Wednesdays between 7:30am – 6pm.
- Fridays (7:30am – 6pm) will be available for anyone to accommodate those who could not file during their allotted window.

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The day or time of day in which a claim is filed will not impact whether you receive benefits or your benefit amount. Additionally, claims will be back-dated to reflect the date in which a claimant was laid-off or let go from their job due to COVID-19.

IDES is currently working through an unparalleled number of unemployment benefit claims and questions, both online and through the call center. Over the first three weeks of March, IDES has received over 130,000 unemployment benefit claims, an increase of close to 400% compared to the corresponding weeks the prior year. The department received close to 115,000 claims for the week of March 21 alone, an increase of nearly 1,400% compared to the corresponding week the prior year. Additionally, the call center continues to field hundreds of calls per minute, per day.

The administration and the department understand and empathize with the heightened level of frustration this crisis has had on those wishing to file a claim. IDES is doing everything possible to support our customers and meet the demand for unemployment benefit inquiries and claims.

Those with questions or in need of assistance with unemployment benefit at this time are encouraged to visit [IDES.Illinois.gov](https://www.ides.illinois.gov).

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