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## Road to Recovery: Signing up for unemployment

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Florida's ballooning unemployment has left about 1 million people in the state without work, including 34,000 people in Lee, according to data from the state's Agency for Workforce Innovation.

Many are unemployed for the first time and the sheer numbers have made it difficult to navigate the state's unemployment compensation system.

"The demand has physically overwhelmed our infrastructure," agency spokesman Robby Cunningham said.

However, the agency said people will have an easier time seeking benefits by following a few tips.

### **How to qualify**

- You must wait for one week after filing for benefits before you are eligible to receive them. It typically takes three to four weeks to get your first check.
- You must have worked and earned wages during the first four quarters of the previous five. This is the base period.
- You must have total base period wages of at least 1.5 times the wages in the quarter having the highest earnings.
- You must have at least \$3,400 total wages in the base period.
- The minimum weekly benefit amount is \$32; the maximum weekly benefit amount is \$275, depending on your income.

### **What you need to file**

First gather the following information:

- Your Social Security number.
- Names, addresses and phone numbers of all employers in the past 18 months and dates worked and total earnings from each.
- Total earnings for the current week since 12:01 a.m. Sunday.
- A driver's license or other picture ID.
- The name and local number of your labor union hall, if applicable.
- If not a U.S. citizen, your alien registration number and work permit expiration date.
- If you served in the military, you will need your DD-214 form.
- If you were a federal employee, find Form SF-50 or Form SF-8 and check stubs or a W-2 proof of earnings.
- After filing your initial claim, you must recertify every two weeks that you are seeking employment. The agency recommends recertifying online or over the phone. The agency recommends calling Wednesday through Friday after 5 p.m. or on Saturday to avoid highest call volumes.

### **Where to file**

- By Internet - Log on to [fluidnow.com](http://fluidnow.com)
  - By phone: Call 800-204-2418 or 866-778-7356 or 800-732-8204. Call Center hours are 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday to Friday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.
  - By Fax: 850-921-3865
  - By Mail: Agency for Workforce Innovation, Tallahassee Claims Center, P.O. Box 5300, FL 32314-5300.
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