

HURRICANE RECOVERY SERVICES



Questions and Answers for Business

What is the best resource for businesses to address their workforce challenges? With more than 3,500 delivery points nationwide, One-Stop Career Centers provide a vast network to address the human resource and employment needs of both business and job seekers in every community. The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration provides funding for One-Stop Career Centers to offer a wide array of services and delivery options to build a skilled workforce that supports current and future economic growth. Partners in One-Stop Career Centers include federally funded employment, training, education, and human service programs as well as local non-profits and community organizations that partner and provide services through the One-Stop. Employers can locate their closest One-Stop Career Center through America's Service Locator at <http://servicelocator.org/>.

How can employers find and hire individuals displaced by the hurricanes?

Several resources are available to help employers make connections with evacuees from the Gulf Coast. The Hurricane Recovery Job Connection is a new nationwide Web site designed to connect employers and jobseekers. On this site, employers can post job opportunities and search the resumes of Katrina-impacted individuals. The site is accessible at www.jobsearch.org/hurricanejobs, or through America's Job Bank at www.ajb.org. Additionally, several state and local workforce agencies and their community partners are hosting job fairs specifically targeting hurricane evacuees. The Hurricane Recovery Job Connection Web site will include links to job fair information and contacts for employers.

What are employers' requirements for completing and retaining Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9) Forms for new employees who have lost their identification documents?

On September 6, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that for 45 days it would not sanction employers for hiring Hurricane Katrina-affected individuals who do not have the required documentation. Employers still need to complete the Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9) Form as completely as possible, but should note when documentation normally required is not available due to Hurricane Katrina. State workforce agencies are available to assist individuals and employers in completing the process required to obtain or replace the documents.

Are there any tax policies or incentives for employers to hire jobseekers displaced by the Hurricanes?

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) for Hurricane Katrina Employees was enacted on September 23. This federal income tax credit encourages employers to hire individuals who lived in the Hurricane Katrina disaster area and lost their jobs due to Hurricane Katrina. The tax credit can reduce an employer's federal tax liability by as much as \$2,400 per new hire. Employers that hire "Hurricane Katrina Employees" for employment outside of the affected area may be eligible for the tax credit if they hire individuals who begin working between August 29 and December 31, 2005. New application forms for this tax credit are under development and will be posted on the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov.

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Recovery and redevelopment will require skilled and trained workers, particularly in the skilled trades. How can employers access such workers?

As part of the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative, the Department of Labor has issued \$12 million in grants to Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas to train workers for jobs in construction, energy, healthcare, transportation, and the safety-security sector—industries which are critical to the economic recovery of the Gulf region. These grants will focus on short-term training that provides a quick return to employment. Additionally, the Department of Labor has awarded National Emergency Grants (NEGs) to Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas to provide temporary jobs for dislocated workers to help support recovery and clean-up efforts. These temporary jobs can be designed to be a bridge to permanent employment in high growth and high demand industries. The points of contact for these temporary jobs programs are governors' offices and state workforce agencies.

Employers who hire individuals displaced by the Hurricane may notice that their new employees need additional assistance in adapting to their new environment. What resources are available to help displaced workers integrate to their new environment?

Hurricane evacuees may be separated from family members and may need immediate and ongoing assistance as they cope with grief, stress management, career adjustments, and daily life activities. The Department of Labor is funding 150 highly skilled reintegration counselors in areas with the largest concentrations of individuals displaced due to the hurricane. These reintegration counselors will help ensure that hurricane-impacted individuals have access to the full array of employment, training, education, and human services available in their community.

If a business would like to hire an individual displaced by the hurricanes but he/she lacks a work history or has other barriers to employment, what resources are available to support employers who are willing to hire these at-risk displaced individuals?

Employers may consider using the Federal Bonding Program which provides Fidelity Bonds to anyone not eligible for commercial bonding, at no cost to the employers or employees. These bonds are business insurance policies that protect the employer in case of any loss of money or property due to employee dishonesty. The program is available for anyone who cannot secure employment without bonding, and bonding coverage can apply to any job at any employer in any state. The bond insurance goes into effect instantly on the first day of the applicant's employment, and will terminate after six months. After six months, continued coverage can be purchased. Additional information on the Federal Bonding program is available at <http://www.bonds4jobs.com/>.

What resources exist to help employers conduct background checks when infrastructure normally used for verification has been damaged or destroyed?

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has obtained the authority to provide states access to the FBI's criminal history database for the purpose of conducting background checks on any volunteer, relief worker, or evacuee associated with Hurricane Katrina, who would have access to children. The FBI is waiving its \$24.00 fee that is normally charged for fingerprint-based checks relating to employment, licensing, and suitability. This limited authority expires on November 7, 2005, and requires that a state or federal statute authorizes a fingerprint-based criminal history background check for individuals with access to children.