

News Release



U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Release Number 05-1848-DAL

For Immediate Release
Date: Sept. 28, 2005
Contact: Bob Zachariasiewicz or David James
Phone: (202) 693-4686 (202) 693-4676

U. S. Labor Department Extends Annual Reports Deadline After Hurricane Rita Hits Louisiana and Texas *Deadline for Areas Affected by Hurricane Katrina Also Further Extended*

WASHINGTON—The U. S. Department of Labor’s Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) today announced an extension of the deadline for filing Form 5500 and Form 5500-EZ annual report/returns for employee benefit plans due to property damage and destruction from Hurricane Rita in Louisiana and Texas.

President Bush has declared a major disaster in five parishes in Louisiana and nine counties in Texas due to the damage caused by the hurricane. The extension applies to plan administrators, employers and other entities located in the areas directly affected, as identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The extension also applies to firms located outside the affected areas who are unable to obtain the necessary information from service providers, banks or insurance companies whose operations were directly affected by the hurricane.

If the President declares additional counties eligible for federal assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, this extension will also apply to them.

Under this relief, Form 5500 series filings required to be filed between Sept. 23, 2005, and Feb. 28, 2006, are granted an extension until Feb. 28, 2006. Plan filers entitled to an extension of relief should check Part I, Box D, on the Form 5500 or Part 1 on Form 5500-EZ and attach a statement to the form in accordance with the instructions.

Additionally, the filing deadline announced by the department on Sept. 20, 2005, for the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina has been extended to Feb. 28, 2006.

The agencies – EBSA, Internal Revenue Service and Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation -- realize that, due to this natural disaster, there may be instances when full compliance may not be possible. The guiding principle must be to ensure that appropriate efforts are made to act reasonably, prudently and in the interest of the workers and their families, who rely on their health, pension and other benefits for their physical and economic well-being.

For more information about disaster relief, contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency at 1-800-621-3362 or (202) 621-FEMA or the Internal Revenue Service at www.irs.gov under “Disaster Area Tax Relief.” Filers who have additional questions may contact EBSA’s EFAST Help Line at 1-866-463-3278.

###

U.S. Labor Department releases are accessible on the Internet at www.dol.gov/ebsa. The information in this news release will be made available in alternate format upon request (large print, Braille, audio tape or disc) from the COAST office. Please specify which news release when placing your request. Call (202) 693 -7765 or TTY (202) 693-3911. The U.S. Department of Labor is committed to providing America’s employers and employees with easy access to understandable information on how to comply with its laws and regulations. For more information, please visit www.dol.gov/compliance.