



OKLAHOMA

Employment Security Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Weekly Unemployment Claims Decline for Second Straight Week

OKLAHOMA CITY – The number of initial Unemployment Insurance claims dropped for the second week in a row as the state prepares to reopen for business amid an energy crisis and COVID-19 related job losses.

For the week ending April 18, 2020, unadjusted initial claims in Oklahoma totaled 40,297, a decrease of 14,185 from the previous adjusted week of 54,481, revised up from the initially reported total of 48,977.

Nationally, the seasonally adjusted initial claims totaled 4,427,000, a decrease of 810,000 from the previous week's revised level of 5,237,000. The advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate for the country was 11 percent for the week ending April 11, up 2.8 percent.

"The toll on our state's economy from the energy crisis and COVID-19 related business closures are reflected in the tremendous number of Oklahomans seeking unemployment assistance," said OESC Executive Director Robin Roberson. "While businesses look toward a phased-in reopening of our state, we're now focused on both connecting claimants with the relief they need and helping them re-enter the job market."

Many employers are looking for employees right now at <https://okjobmatch.com/>. There is also the expectation that people should return to work when their employer reopens.

As the agency looks toward helping revive Oklahoma's economy, it will also begin issuing Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) next week to individuals who don't qualify for regular Unemployment Insurance benefits

"Independent contractors, gig workers and other self-employed individuals eligible for PUA will have applications processed within a few days," Roberson said. "We're making the final changes to our platform to begin issuing PUA relief for COVID-19 related job loss and business closure. We've made it easier for these applicants by permitting them to apply for this relief directly."

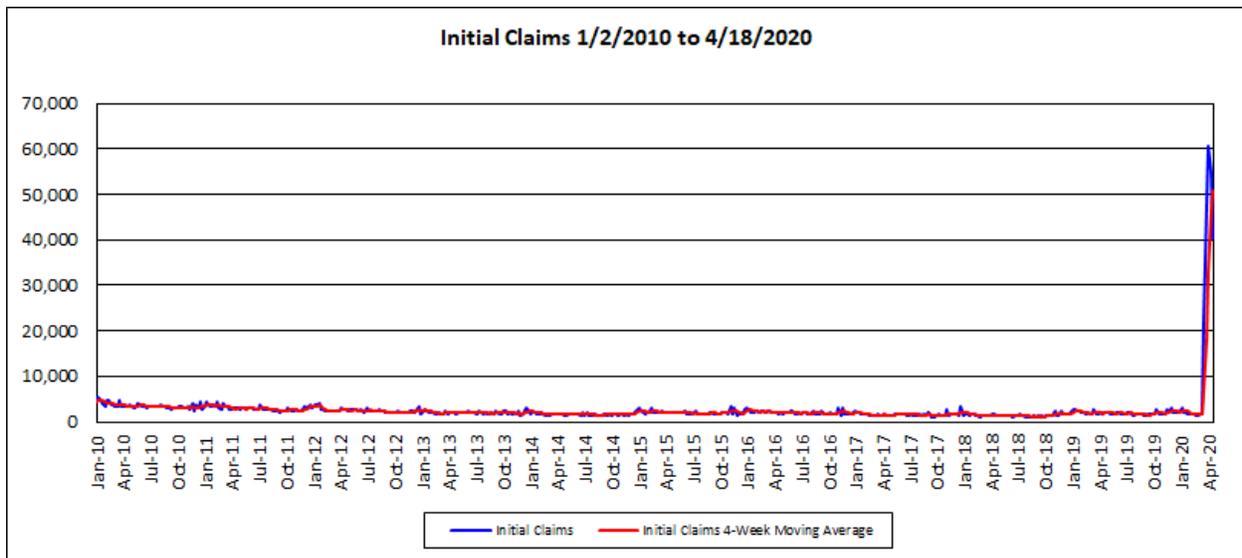
Previously, an individual had to first be denied eligibility for regular unemployment benefits before applying for the pandemic unemployment benefit. PUA applicants should go to <https://ui.ok.gov> and pre-apply. These applicants will already be in the pipeline when the agency begins processing these additional claims next week.

If a PUA eligible claimant goes back to work as the state reopens, they will still receive backdated unemployment benefits to when their COVID-19 related job loss or business closure occurred.

If a claimant returns to work fulltime, they should keep their unemployment claim open with OESC and not certify a weekly claim. If they return part-time, a claimant may continue to certify their weekly claim and must report all gross earnings for the week to potentially receive a partial benefit. Eligibility for continued benefits is determined on the circumstances of each individual claimant.

The national weekly seasonally adjusted initial claims report is one of ten components in the Composite Index of Leading Economic Indicators. To smooth out the volatility in the weekly initial claims data, a 4-week moving average is used to assess trends.

In Oklahoma, the less volatile initial claims four-week moving average climbed 4,593 to 50,764 for the week ending 4/18/2020.



The advance unadjusted number for continued claims totaled 111,198, an increase of 22,868 from the previous week. The continued four-week moving average increased 23,586 to 69,956.

