

US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
DRAFT MASS UNEMPLOYMENT EVENT (MUE)
TOOLBOX

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1 INTRODUCTION

Note to the reader: This document is a work-in-progress. The purpose of this document is to give the reader a list of the contents of the MUE Toolbox along with notes and partial preliminary drafts of the information to more clearly describe what the section contains.

1.1 Background

[This section provides information to put the MUE Toolbox in context.]

It is the policy of the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) to insure the continuity of operations of essential Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs. The primary objectives of the UI National Disaster Preparedness Planning Effort is to establish the protocols, methods, and organizations to materially assist and augment a state UI agency whose UI claims processing capacity has been rendered insufficient from:

- A reduction in a state UI agency's UI claims processing capacity resulting from an adverse event or emergency of any origin, or
- The onset of a Mass Unemployment Event (MUE) of any origin.

Because the type and nature of threats to the UI systems are diverse; encompassing adversity due to weather, volcanic action, terrorism, war, nuclear accident, earthquakes, disease, and man-made structure failures; the plan must:

- Be maintained at a high level of readiness
- Be capable of implementation both with and without warning
- Be operational no later than 24 hours after activation

1.2 Purpose

[This section explains the purpose of the MUE Toolbox.]

The MUE Toolbox can be considered a “chapter in” or an “addendum to” each states’ Continuity of Operations (COOP) or Disaster Response and Recovery Plan. The purpose of the MUE Toolbox is to provide the states with recommended actions they should undertake to ensure each state is prepared to continue timely operations during an MUE or other emergency.

The MUE Toolbox also provides standard procedures and forms for engaging assistance from other state UI agencies.

1.3 Assumptions

[This section describes the assumptions the MUE Toolbox is based on.]

The contents of the MUE Toolbox were developed to help state UI agencies address the most likely MUE situations.

The MUE Toolbox assumes a major disaster is the cause of the MUE and that a “State of Emergency” has been declared by the governor of the impacted state and/or the President of the United States.

States have a COOP for their UI systems therefore the MUE Toolbox assumes the affected or requesting state’s UI benefit system is operational (at either the main facility or an alternate site) and the states’ telephone and Internet systems are functional. If a state’s UI IT infrastructure is damaged or destroyed this is a different situation than an MUE and will be covered by the UI agency’s COOP or Disaster Response and Recovery plan.

The impacted state UI agency will ensure there is a resource assigned who is “reachable” and is either the “decision maker” or has access to the “decision makers” (MUE contact).

During the onset of an MUE the state UI agency’s first responsibilities are to take initial claims, make payments, and certify continued claims. Other essential functions that must continue (in no particular order) are address changes and employer reporting.

Note: We need to add an assumption about the MUE distribution and Internal Communication websites when they are defined because it will affect the content and wording of some of the sections such as 2.2 and 3.1 among others.

1.4 Definition of Terms

Please refer to the glossary attached to the end of this document for the definitions of acronyms and uncommon terms used herein.

1.5 When to Use These Tools

[This section provides guidance on when a state might request assistance from another state. The content of this section will be derived from the issues discussed in the National UI Disaster Preparedness document such as the percent increase in initial claim volume over normal for the period and the nature and amount of reduction in UI agency resources that might constitute an MUE for your state.]

1.6 Legal Agreement Restrictions

[This section describes any restrictions on using the included legal agreement templates such as an EMAC agreement can only be used when the governor of the requesting state has declared a State of Emergency.]

2 HOW TO USE THIS TOOLBOX

[This section includes step-by-step instructions and guidelines for the preparation and use of the tools.]

2.1 General MUE Preparedness Guidelines

[This section includes guidance and checklists for the parts of the state UI agency's COOP or Disaster Response and Recovery Plan and other similar plans and preparedness activities that will be especially important during an MUE.]

Include on COOP checklist:

- State has an alternate computing facility that can be used in the event the primary facility is damaged or destroyed or a Disaster Services contract with SunGuard, IBM, or other similar company that will provide alternate computing facilities.
- State has reviewed their Emergency Operations Center (EOC) guidelines and knows how to interact with EOC in the event of an emergency.
- State's EOC has an alternate communications plan that uses satellite phones, amateur radio, or other similar forms of communication when the normal telecommunications infrastructure is damaged or destroyed.
- State has briefed EOC on an MUE and their potential role in providing alternate communications if required

2.2 MUE Preparedness Checklists

[This section includes guidance and checklists for MUE-specific items.]

Include on checklist:

Established MUE point-of-contact for the state UI agency and prepared external communications disaster web page.

Posted links to the following websites on the MUE Toolbox Internal Communications website and have established a system to keep them current.

- State Emergency Operations
- USDOL Regional and Alternate Contact List
- FEMA Point of Contact List for Regions – This includes Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) contacts after the DRC is established.
- EMAC Point of Contact List
- Signature Authority List – These are the people who have the authority to sign and/or must approve the legal agreements.

3 COMMUNICATIONS

[This section includes one or more templates and guidelines for the states, USDOL Regional Offices, and USDOL National Office as required on when and how to communicate during an MUE.]

3.1 MUE Contact List

The MUE contact list will contain the main point-of-contact and an alternate for each state UI agency. The MUE contact is a resource that is “reachable” and is the “decision maker” or has access to the “decision makers.” The MUE contact list will be developed by USDOL and posted on the MUE Toolbox Internal Communications website.

3.2 Procedures to Keep Contact Lists Current

[This section includes standard procedures to keep all contact lists and communication plans current and uniform across the regions.]

3.3 Regional Communications Plan Guidance

[This section includes guidance and procedures for USDOL Regional Offices and associated states and may also include guidance for communication between regions.]

This section includes communications between requesting and assisting states.

Periodic contact throughout the disaster:

- The affected regional office should gather observations and questions from assisting states, compile them, and pass them on to the requesting state for their consideration and possible response.
- The affected regional office and affected state should communicate every day at the same time during the MUE.

Regional Office communications plan checklist should identify a session plan as part of their COOP in the event the RO is affected by the disaster also.

3.4 Internal Information Sharing

[This section contains information about the MUE Toolbox Internal Communications website and how to access and use it.]

Information posted in near real-time by authorized personnel only

Individual states and special groups of UI personnel will have access to it or be able to edit it via an ID and password (role-based access)

Affected state and/or region will post information during Disaster/MUE

Common instructions for gathering and communicating information, including common terminology will be established to “formalize and institutionalize” the process.

Earlier version of this document referenced “Internal Personnel” in this section. Does anyone know what that is in reference to?

3.4.1 UI Community

This section will include a template to guide the format and content of a state UI agency’s public information website and news release information for posting here so other state and regional office personnel will know where to look for the information they need to answer inquiries quickly.

3.4.2 Communications Between Requesting and Assisting States

UI Disaster/MUE Services Assessment – Is that part of MUE Toolbox and if so does it go here or where?

Bob Wagner’s price estimator – Same questions as above

We should include some “things to consider” in the MUE Toolbox guidance/checklists for states that are contemplating having another state scan their documents such as:

- Provisions to insure confidentiality throughout the entire process (shipping documents to be scanned, scanning, and returning or shredding scanned documents)
- Procedures to prevent commingling requesting and assisting states documents
- A tracking and marking system to prevent “double scanning or working” documents

3.5 External Information Sharing

External communications strategy is to advise the public how to contact the affected UI agency to file and inquire about claims and what has changed as a result of the MUE.

3.5.1 Communications with Instructions for Claimants

This is a checklist for what should be in the public news release with emphasis on what has changed as a result of the MUE. The affected state prepares the release, posts it on their website, and provides link to Internal Communication Website.

3.5.2 Periodic Contact Throughout the Disaster

3.5.3 Regional, Assisting States

3.5.4 Public Information Website Template

This is a link to the standard guidance posted on state UI agency's website. Content may contain disaster news, areas impacted by the disaster, contact information, claim filing methods and instructions, other links and other state websites.

This relates to section 3.5.1 Communications with Instructions for Claimants above. Perhaps these two should be combined.

3.5.5 News Release Template

3.6 *RO Communications Plan Checklist*

This checklist includes items for the RO to consider when communicating to requesting and assisting states both inside and outside of the region.

3.7 *MUE Coordinating Procedures*

Policies and Procedures for Coordinating MUE Interactions between UI Agencies, EMAC, and State EOCs or Requesting and Assisting States

4 LEGAL AGREEMENTS

We envision this as a two-tiered agreement for government and non-government services. The first tier would consist of the boilerplate, terms, and conditions and are either the existing state EMAC agreement or a separate agreement that is approved in advance. The second tier is a Statement of Work that describes the specific services and costs for a particular instance and is approved before the services are delivered.

4.1 *Requesting/Assisting State Instructions and Procedures*

This includes guidance, step by step procedures, and completion checklist.

4.1.1 How to Request and Respond to Assistance Requests

4.1.2 How Requesting and Assisting States Will Communicate and Interact

4.2 *Categorized Summary of Available Resources*

This will include individual and pre-packaged groups of services with a description of what they typically include. Every effort will be made to develop descriptions that are consistent across all the states.

4.3 *Pre-defined Service Package Forms*

These forms will include sample descriptions of the most likely services to be requested and provided such as call center agents, adjudicators, and claims taking support.

4.4 *Assistance Request Template*

A complete description of the specific service being requested or offered describing exactly what they include such as duty statements, durations, travel costs, working limitations, and administrative fees among other items and how they will be provided.

4.5 *Real-Time On-Demand Pricing Guidance*

This includes instructions, checklists and spreadsheet templates to help you state setup a system to quickly and accurately price the services your state is offering to provide. This will also include such considerations as budget cycles, economic conditions, union contracts and in-state/out-of-state service delivery among others.

4.6 *Statement of Work Template(s)*

This is the second tier of the agreement. It is completed and approved for each instance of assistance. It will include the following:

4.6.1 Services Requested

The services requested will be those services in the Service Request Template that the requesting state wants to procure from a particular assisting state.

4.6.2 Services Provided

The services provided will be the assisting state's response to the requested services.

4.6.3 Reporting Requirements

This includes assisting states providing periodic progress reports on work performed, funds expended, and irregularities to the requesting state and appropriate UI reporting to USDOL for both states.

4.6.4 Agreements

This section describes what the assisting and requesting states agree to. It may include changes or clarifications to the request or response such as a different number of personnel or the working times among others.

4.7 State Approvals Form

This is the signature page of the agreement.

4.8 Maintain Interstate Legal Agreements

We have to determine the right approach to requesting the states to review these legal agreements periodically to insure the mechanisms to execute them are still current. Contracts have performance durations, laws change, processes might change with administrations, etc. Is this a checklist unto itself or is it a line item on a higher level checklist?

We should look into how EMAC maintains its agreements for possible guidance.

5 MUE SIMULATIONS AND DISASTER RESPONSES

5.1 Simulation and Exercise Guidelines

5.2 Simulation Scenarios

This will include sample MUE and denial of service situations that may be used as models for each state's simulations.

5.3 Simulation MUE Coordinating Procedures

Policies and Procedures for Coordinating MUE Interactions between UI Agencies, EMAC, and State EOCs or Requesting and Assisting States

5.4 Collection/Reporting Requirements

This will be added as an additional deliverable out of the legal agreements used for simulations.

5.4.1 Feedback Instruments

For collecting historical and lessons learned information from simulated and real disasters.

5.4.2 Services Provided Through Routing Requests to Assisting States

(BR056) [Not sure what the Interstate UI Disaster Preparedness Workgroup had in mind here.](#)

5.4.3 MUE Response Evaluation

Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Activities require Reporting and Evaluation to Determine Effectiveness and Measure Improvement
Feedback Instruments

5.4.4 Report On MUE Response and Recovery Activities

5.4.5 Capture Evaluation of Disasters and Disaster Simulations

5.4.6 Capture Lessons Learned from Simulations and Exercises

5.4.7 Develop Lessons Learned

5.5 Lessons Learned/Update Template

5.5.1 Update MUE Guidance Checklists, Processes and Procedures with Lessons Learned from Simulations and Exercises

6 MUE TOOL BOX MAINTENANCE

This will be determined after the MUE Toolbox is developed.

6.1 Inventory Maintenance Plan

6.2 On-Going Exercises Plan

6.3 Maintenance Continuity Plan

6.4 Contact List Maintenance Plan

Things to consider including:

1. [Requirement from business rule 27 suggested by Interstate UI Disaster Preparedness Workgroup] Suggestions for ramping up services in assisting states, handle overtime, rehire retirees

2. We still have to determine what we want to do about the workgroup's desire that the list of services (UI Disaster Services Inventory) be "kept up-to-date."

GLOSSARY

This is a sample of the MUE Attachment - Disclaimer. SAMPLE TEXT: This document is part of a larger set of documents comprising the findings and requirements determined through an analysis of the MUE Toolbox. This document will probably require referencing one or more of the other documents such as the Glossary, Concept of Operations, or other referenced documentation for complete understanding.

ATTACHMENT I: GLOSSARY

Acronym	Definition
DRC	Disaster Recovery Center (FEMA term)
EMAC	Emergency Management Assistance Compact
EO	Emergency Operations
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FCO	Federal Coordinating Officer (FEMA term)
FEMA	Federal Emergency management Agency
MUE	Mass Unemployment Event
RO	Regional Office
UI	Unemployment Insurance
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
UIPL	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter