OKLAHOMA EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION

# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Wildfire disaster aid available to workers in Carter, Cleveland, Grady, Lincoln, McClain, Murray, Oklahoma, Payne and Stephens counties

***Self-employed workers in these counties also may qualify for disaster assistance***

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK (June 24, 2009) – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) has announced that workers in Carter, Cleveland, Grady, Lincoln, McClain, Murray, Oklahoma, Payne and Stephens counties who lost work or earnings due to wildfires that occurred in the state beginning April 9, 2009, and continuing through April 12, 2009, have until the close of business on July 24, 2009, to apply for disaster unemployment assistance (DUA) under Presidential Disaster Declaration FEMA-1846-DR.

To be eligible for DUA under Presidential Disaster Declaration FEMA-1846-DR, individuals must:

- have worked or been scheduled to work in the disaster area, but because of the disaster no longer have a job or a place to work in the area, or could not get to the place of work because of disaster damage;
- have been prevented from working by an injury or illness as a direct result of the disaster; or
- have become the head of the household and need employment because the head of the household died as a result of the disaster.

To claim DUA, unemployment of an affected individual must be a direct result of one of the following:

- physical damage or destruction of the place of employment;
- physical inaccessibility of the place of employment due to its closure by the federal, state or local government in immediate response to the disaster; or
- lack of work or loss of revenues, if prior to the disaster the employer or self-employed business received at least a majority of its revenue or income from an entity in the major disaster area that was damaged or destroyed in the disaster or an entity in the major disaster area closed by the federal, state or local government.

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Often, business owners who are self-employed are not aware of potential benefits to which they may be entitled. If you are self-employed and have lost all or part of your livelihood as a result of this disaster, you may be eligible for benefits. Self-employed workers must provide federal income tax forms (Schedule SE as well as either Schedule C or Schedule F) to receive disaster unemployment benefits.

To receive DUA benefits, individuals must provide documentation within 21 days from the day the claim was filed indicating an employment record at the time of the disaster or verification of the weeks the applicant was scheduled to work. OESC officials understand that because of property losses, some individuals may not have necessary information readily available. Each claim is considered individually; therefore, if you believe you may be eligible for assistance, please call the OESC Unemployment Insurance Service Centers at one of the listed numbers Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Those living within the Oklahoma City metropolitan area should call 405-525-1500. For all others, please call 1-800-555-1554 to begin the claim process

When calling to apply for benefits, individuals should have, when possible, (1) their Social Security number and (2) the name and address of their last employer or prospective employer.

Claims filed after July 24, 2009, will be considered untimely and benefits will be denied unless the individual provides good cause for filing after this date. The first possible week of compensation for DUA purposes is the week ending April 18, 2009, and the last possible week of compensation is the week ending December 19, 2009. For local workforce services, job seekers and employers can contact their nearest Workforce Oklahoma Center at **1-888-980-WORK (9675)**.

At Workforce Oklahoma, job seekers can access job search resources, job postings and training programs as well as assistance with career exploration, résumé and application preparation, career development and more. Customers also may connect with potential employers through OESC's website at www.oesc.state.ok.us.com. Workforce center services for employers include job posting and placement, up-to-date information on the labor market and emerging occupations, and assistance with recruiting, retention, training, tax and hiring incentives. Employers can also recruit new staff at www.oesc.state.ok.us.com.

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