

FAQs: Furloughs vs. Layoffs and Unemployment Benefits

For more information visit: des.nc.gov/federalworkers



NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE
EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

1. What is the difference between a furlough and a layoff?

Furlough vs. Layoff		
Feature	Furlough	Layoff
Employment Status	Still employed (but not working)	Not working. There has been a complete separation from employment.
Pay	Unpaid during furlough	No pay after termination date
Benefits	Often continue (ex., health insurance)	Usually end, unless covered by COBRA or severance
Duration	Temporary, expected to return	Often permanent, unless rehired
Unemployment	May qualify	Usually qualifies
Rehire Process	No rehire needed	Must be rehired as a new employee
Return to Work	Must repay unemployment benefits if return to work and employer gives backpay for same period that you were getting unemployment	Do not get backpay and usually hired by different employer

Each unemployment claim is reviewed separately. There may be differences based on individual claim.

2. Am I able to apply for unemployment if I'm furloughed?

Yes – anyone can file for unemployment. In North Carolina, if you're furloughed and not working or getting paid, you may qualify for unemployment benefits.

3. If I'm furloughed, then return to work, and my employer gives me backpay, will I need to pay back my unemployment benefits?

Furloughed employees who get unemployment benefits and later get backpay from their employer for the same time period must repay any unemployment benefits received.

4. Am I eligible to file for unemployment if I'm laid off?

Yes – anyone can file for unemployment. Laid-off employees are generally eligible for unemployment benefits, assuming they meet state-specific requirements.

5. Do I need to actively search for work while furloughed or laid off to get unemployment benefits?

Yes, in North Carolina, you must reach out to three job contacts or job searches each week while claiming benefits, whether you were furloughed or laid off.

6. How do unemployment benefit amounts differ between furloughed and laid-off workers?

The amount you get in unemployment depends on how much you made before, whether you were furloughed or laid off. In North Carolina, the most you can get is \$350 a week for up to 12 weeks.

7. What happens to my unemployment benefits if I'm called back from furlough?

If you return to work and start getting paid, you must tell DES. If you get backpay from your employer for the time you got unemployment, you'll have to repay those benefits.