

Rapid response to mass layoffs

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**Employment
Security
oversees
statewide
“rapid
response”
to mass layoffs**

**FY 2014:
rapid-response
was deployed
for 42 mass
layoffs,
involving 3,095
workers**

**Assistance is
tailored to the
workers**

The federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 requires each state to establish a rapid-response team within its Dislocated-Worker Unit. In Washington state, that unit is housed in the Employment Security Department. The team quickly assists employers and affected workers after the announcement of a permanent closure, mass layoff or disaster that results in a mass job dislocation. Two major events trigger state rapid-response activities:

1. When a notice is filed under the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN). The WARN notice requires employers to provide notice 60 days in advance of plant closings and mass layoffs for employers over a certain size. This notice must be provided to affected workers or their representatives, local government and the state’s Dislocated-Worker Unit (located within the Employment Security Department).
2. When a petition is filed under the federal Trade and Globalization Assistance Act (TAA) of 2009. The filing requires the state Dislocated-Worker Unit to ensure that rapid-response assistance and appropriate core and intensive services are made available to workers covered by the petition. If the TAA petition is approved, the eligible workers are entitled to additional benefits and training opportunities to help them return to work. *(See the Trade Adjustment Assistance fact sheet, #FS-0012, for more details.)*

In the July 2013-June 2014 fiscal year the Employment Security Department’s Rapid-Response/WARN Unit received 42 WARN notices affecting 3,095 workers. Also in FY 2014, local workforce development councils received \$5.4 million in additional rapid-response funds to provide services to dislocated workers, such as training and support services.

How rapid response occurs

When a major layoff is announced, the state’s rapid-response team quickly establishes communication with the employer and locally based rapid-response partners. After state and local partners determine what initial information is available and assess the immediate needs of the workers and the employer, they establish appropriate “first steps” in responding as a workforce system and form strategies for planning and carrying out initial rapid-response activities.

An on-site meeting may be scheduled with the employer, including union officials, if applicable, to gather information and schedule pre-layoff workshops for the dislocated workers. The team obtains the commitment of company management and the union, if applicable, to actively participate in planning and implementing key tasks, such as a worker survey, pre-layoff workshops about unemployment and reemployment services, placing staff on-site to deliver transition services and outreach activities. A transitional or labor-management committee may be formed to help guide the process and make sure workers get the services they need.

Rapid-response partner organizations

- Dislocated-Worker Unit (Employment Security Department).
- Workforce development councils (locally based).
- WorkSource centers.
- Unemployment-insurance program (Employment Security Department).
- Washington State Labor Council and local labor affiliates.
- Reemployment support centers (when applicable), which provide services aimed at addressing emotional, physical, medical and/or financial barriers that keep dislocated workers from finding work.
- Community and technical colleges.

Services to employers and workers

Employers receive confidential assistance with planning transition needs for their workers. This includes help understanding WARN requirements, information about possible layoff alternatives and assistance in conducting an orderly shutdown, if necessary. Employers also given information about pre-layoff services that can help their employees get back to work sooner, how to maintain worker morale and productivity during the transition, and what types of employment services are available to workers through the local WorkSource centers.

Workers: Rapid-response teams provide orientation to workers about employment and training services that are available to help them get back to work. Services are customized to meet the specific needs of the individuals being laid off. They also receive information about unemployment benefits, and mass unemployment applications may be taken.

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