



Doherty Wallace Pillsbury & Murphy P.C.

**EMPLOYMENT LAW E-ALERT: COVID-19 and Changes to Massachusetts
Unemployment Compensation
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On Wednesday, March 18, 2020, the Massachusetts legislature passed emergency legislation filed by Governor Baker, waiving the one-week waiting period for unemployment compensation.

When do such waivers become effective?

The one-week waiting period will be waived for claims filed on or after March 10, 2020. Waivers will not expire until 90 days after the Governor's declaration of the state of emergency has been lifted.

Which employees qualify for the waiver of the one-week waiting period?

Under the new rules, an employee can collect unemployment if:

- He or she makes a claim for unemployment benefits after becoming separated from work as a result of any circumstance relating to or resulting from the outbreak of the 2019 novel Coronavirus or 'COVID-19' or the effects of the Governor's March 10, 2020 declaration of a state of emergency;
- He or she is under quarantine by order of a civil authority or medical professional;
- He or she leaves employment due to reasonable risk of exposure or infection or to care for a family member and either does not intend to or is not permitted to return to the workplace; or
- His or her workplace has shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic but is expected to reopen in four weeks or less (this can be extended to eight weeks). Employees in this situation must remain in contact with their employers and be available for work, but do not need to be actively seeking employment. The DUA has discretion to extend these periods if necessary.

Will an employer's unemployment tax rates increase?

Unemployment tax rates may increase, but the DUA is giving employers a 60-day grace period to file quarterly reports and pay unemployment contributions.

How do employees file a claim?

Employees can visit the DUA's website for information on how to apply for benefits.

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