

State Employment Law Tracker, ¶20,140D, Emergency relief available for employers struggling to pay workers' comp premiums due to pandemic — WASHINGTON — Workers' compensation, (Apr. 9, 2020)

The Department of Labor and Industries is providing emergency relief to help employers struggling to pay their workers' compensation premiums during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, according to the Department's April 6 announcement.

The Department is now offering a grace period for premium payments, along with payment plans for employers facing financial difficulties during the pandemic. Under this new offer, employers can request for their payment to be deferred for up to 90 days, or can ask for a 90-day payment plan. Either way, the delayed payments will be penalty- and interest-free.

The agency wants to make sure businesses know about and consider taking advantage of this Employer Assistance Program.

"This is clearly a hard time for everyone. And restrictions and closures are making it very tough for businesses to make financial ends meet," said Vickie Kennedy, assistant director for the Department's Division of Insurance Services. "We're trying to help by allowing employers to delay or spread out their payments at no additional cost to them. This will give businesses more time and allow them to stay in good standing."

Payments for the first quarter of 2020 are due no later than April 30. To be eligible for this coronavirus-related assistance, employers must contact their Department account manager if they know they won't be able to make their quarterly premium payment. Account managers are available by phone at 360-902-4817.

Once employers are approved for the assistance program, the Department will waive late penalties and interest charges as long as qualifying businesses pay their premiums within 90 days. In some cases, the payment plan can be renegotiated if a business goes deeper into financial distress.

As part of the agreement, businesses must file their quarterly report on time, which is no later than April 30, 2020. Department of Labor and Industries regional offices are closed to walk-in visits because of the outbreak, however, quarterly reports can be filed online through QuickFile.

For additional services, customers can find the phone numbers for offices in local communities online or call the Department's Office of Information and Assistance at 360-902-5800.

Source: Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, News Release No. 20-008, April 6, 2020.