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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact: Kyle Thweatt  
Office of the Commissioner  
State of Vermont  
Department of Labor  
802-461-8807**

**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR TEMPORARILY SUSPENDS ONLINE  
UI APPLICATION FOR NEW FILERS IN ORDER TO COMBAT FRAUD**

Montpelier, Vt. – On Wednesday, April 28, the Vermont Department of Labor disabled its online unemployment insurance initial claim application in response to a sharp increase in fraudulent claims being filed. Upon review of the claims being submitted, more than 90% of initial claims were being flagged as fraudulent.

In the meantime, Vermonters who need to file a first-time claim or open a new benefit year can do so by contacting the UI Claimant Assistance Center at 877-214-3330. The Claimant Assistance Center is open Monday-Saturday from 8:00a.m. to 5:30p.m.

“Here at the Department, our ultimate goal is to protect Vermonters, whether that be ensuring individuals receive timely benefits or preventing fraudsters from using the identities of innocent Vermonters to defraud the state. In this case, the most secure solution was to remove the application and make the criminals have to call to open a claim. When we did this, the number of claims being filed dropped by 90% and so too did the fraud,” said Labor Commissioner Michael Harrington.

If an individual receives any mail or notices from the Department of Labor, specifically the Unemployment Insurance division, and has not applied for benefits, they should report this to the Department immediately. This can be done either by submitting an online fraud report or by contacting the UI Fraud Tip Line at 802-828-4104. Likewise, if an employer receives any requests for separation information for an employee who is still working, this may also be an indication of fraud and should be reported immediately.

To safeguard the system and the identities of Vermonters, the Department is working to strengthen fraud prevention measures to better detect and prevent fraudulent claims filing going forward.

More information about how Vermonters can protect themselves against unemployment fraud can be found at [www.labor.vermont.gov/ui-fraud](http://www.labor.vermont.gov/ui-fraud).

