

PARTS 626-638 [RESERVED]**PART 639—WORKER ADJUSTMENT
AND RETRAINING NOTIFICATION**

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§ 639.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) *Purpose of WARN.* The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN or the Act) provides protection to workers, their families and communities by requiring employers to provide notification 60 calendar days in advance of plant closings and mass layoffs. Advance notice provides workers and their families some transition time to adjust to the prospective loss of employment, to seek and obtain alternative jobs and, if necessary, to enter skill training or retraining that will allow these workers to successfully compete in the job market. WARN also provides for notice to State dislocated worker units so that dislocated worker assistance can be promptly provided.

(b) *Scope of these regulations.* These regulations establish basic definitions and rules for giving notice, implementing the provisions of WARN. The Department's objective is to establish clear principles and broad guidelines which can be applied in specific circumstances. However, the Department recognizes that Federal rulemaking cannot address the multitude of industry and company-specific situations in which advance notice will be given.

(c) *Notice encouraged where not required.* Section 7 of the Act states:

It is the sense of Congress that an employer who is not required to comply with the notice requirements of section 3 should, to the extent possible, provide notice to its employ-

ees about a proposal to close a plant or permanently reduce its workforce.

(d) *WARN enforcement.* Enforcement of WARN will be through the courts, as provided in section 5 of the statute. Employees, their representatives and units of local government may initiate civil actions against employers believed to be in violation of §3 of the Act. The Department of Labor has no legal standing in any enforcement action and, therefore, will not be in a position to issue advisory opinions of specific cases. The Department will provide assistance in understanding these regulations and may revise them from time to time as may be necessary.

(e) *Notice in ambiguous situations.* It is civically desirable and it would appear to be good business practice for an employer to provide advance notice to its workers or unions, local government and the State when terminating a significant number of employees. In practical terms, there are some questions and ambiguities of interpretation inherent in the application of WARN to business practices in the market economy that cannot be addressed in these regulations. It is therefore prudent for employers to weigh the desirability of advance notice against the possibility of expensive and time-consuming litigation to resolve disputes where notice has not been given. The Department encourages employers to give notice in all circumstances.

(f) *Coordination with job placement and retraining programs.* The Department, through these regulations and through the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA) and Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance Act (EDWAA) regulations, encourages maximum coordination of the actions and activities of these programs to assure that the negative impact of dislocation on workers is lessened to the extent possible. By providing for notice to the State dislocated worker unit, WARN notice begins the process of assisting workers who will be dislocated.

(g) *WARN not to supersede other laws and contracts.* The provisions of WARN do not supersede any laws or collective bargaining agreements that provide for additional notice or additional rights and remedies. If such law or agreement provides for a longer notice period,

WARN notice shall run concurrently with that additional notice period. Collective bargaining agreements may be used to clarify or amplify the terms and conditions of WARN, but may not reduce WARN rights.

§ 639.2 What does WARN require?

WARN requires employers who are planning a plant closing or a mass layoff to give affected employees at least 60 days' notice of such an employment action. While the 60-day period is the minimum for advance notice, this provision is not intended to discourage employers from voluntarily providing longer periods of advance notice. Not all plant closings and layoffs are subject to the Act, and certain employment thresholds must be reached before the Act applies. WARN sets out specific exemptions, and provides for a reduction in the notification period in particular circumstances. Damages and civil penalties can be assessed against employers who violate the Act.

§ 639.3 Definitions.

(a) *Employer.* (1) The term "employer" means any business enterprise that employs—

(i) 100 or more employees, excluding part-time employees; or

(ii) 100 or more employees, including part-time employees, who in the aggregate work at least 4,000 hours per week, exclusive of hours of overtime.

Workers on temporary layoff or on leave who have a reasonable expectation of recall are counted as employees. An employee has a "reasonable expectation of recall" when he/she understands, through notification or through industry practice, that his/her employment with the employer has been temporarily interrupted and that he/she will be recalled to the same or to a similar job. The term "employer" includes non-profit organizations of the requisite size. Regular Federal, State, local and federally recognized Indian tribal governments are not covered. However, the term "employer" includes public and quasi-public entities which engage in business (*i.e.*, take part in a commercial or industrial enterprise, supply a service or good on a mercantile basis, or provide independent management of public assets,

raising revenue and making desired investments), and which are separately organized from the regular government, which have their own governing bodies and which have independent authority to manage their personnel and assets.

(2) Under existing legal rules, independent contractors and subsidiaries which are wholly or partially owned by a parent company are treated as separate employers or as a part of the parent or contracting company depending upon the degree of their independence from the parent. Some of the factors to be considered in making this determination are (i) common ownership, (ii) common directors and/or officers, (iii) de facto exercise of control, (iv) unity of personnel policies emanating from a common source, and (v) the dependency of operations.

(3) Workers, other than part-time workers, who are exempt from notice under section 4 of WARN are nonetheless counted as employees for purposes of determining coverage as an employer.

(4) An employer may have one or more sites of employment under common ownership or control. An example would be a major auto maker which has dozens of automobile plants throughout the country. Each plant would be considered a site of employment, but there is only one "employer", the auto maker.

(b) *Plant closing.* The term "plant closing" means the permanent or temporary shutdown of a "single site of employment", or one or more "facilities or operating units" within a single site of employment, if the shutdown results in an "employment loss" during *any 30-day period* at the single site of employment for *50 or more* employees, excluding any part-time employees. An employment action that results in the effective cessation of production or the work performed by a unit, even if a few employees remain, is a shutdown. A "temporary shutdown" triggers the notice requirement only if there are a sufficient number of terminations, layoffs exceeding 6 months, or reductions in hours of work as specified under the definition of "employment loss."

(c) *Mass layoff.* (1) The term "mass layoff" means a reduction in force

which first, is not the result of a plant closing, and second, results in an employment loss at the single site of employment during *any 30-day period* for:

(i) *At least 33 percent* of the active employees, excluding part-time employees, and

(ii) *At least 50 employees*, excluding part-time employees.

Where 500 or more employees (excluding part-time employees) are affected, the 33% requirement does not apply, and notice is required if the other criteria are met. Plant closings involve employment loss which results from the shutdown of one or more distinct units within a single site or the entire site. A mass layoff involves employment loss, regardless of whether one or more units are shut down at the site.

(2) Workers, other than part-time workers, who are exempt from notice under section 4 of WARN are nonetheless counted as employees for purposes of determining coverage as a plant closing or mass layoff. For example, if an employer closes a temporary project on which 10 permanent and 40 temporary workers are employed, a covered plant closing has occurred although only 10 workers are entitled to notice.

(d) *Representative*. The term “representative” means an exclusive representative of employees within the meaning of section 9(a) or 8(f) of the National Labor Relations Act or section 2 of the Railway Labor Act.

(e) *Affected employees*. The term “affected employees” means employees who may reasonably be expected to experience an employment loss as a consequence of a proposed plant closing or mass layoff by their employer. This includes individually identifiable employees who will likely lose their jobs because of bumping rights or other factors, to the extent that such individual workers reasonably can be identified at the time notice is required to be given. The term “affected employees” includes managerial and supervisory employees, but does not include business partners. Consultant or contract employees who have a separate employment relationship with another employer and are paid by that other employer, or who are self-employed, are not “affected employees” of the busi-

ness to which they are assigned. In addition, for purposes of determining whether coverage thresholds are met, either incumbent workers in jobs being eliminated or, if known 60 days in advance, the actual employees who suffer an employment loss may be counted.

(f) *Employment loss*. (1) The term “employment loss” means (i) an employment termination, other than a discharge for cause, voluntary departure, or retirement, (ii) a layoff exceeding 6 months, or (iii) a reduction in hours of work of individual employees of more than 50% during each month of any 6-month period.

(2) Where a termination or a layoff (see paragraphs (f)(1)(i) and (ii) of this section) is involved, an employment loss does not occur when an employee is reassigned or transferred to employer-sponsored programs, such as retraining or job search activities, as long as the reassignment does not constitute a constructive discharge or other involuntary termination.

(3) An employee is not considered to have experienced an employment loss if the closing or layoff is the result of the relocation or consolidation of part or all of the employer’s business and, prior to the closing or layoff—

(i) The employer offers to transfer the employee to a different site of employment within a reasonable commuting distance with no more than a 6-month break in employment, or

(ii) The employer offers to transfer the employee to any other site of employment regardless of distance with no more than a 6-month break in employment, and the employee accepts within 30 days of the offer or of the closing or layoff, whichever is later.

(4) A “relocation or consolidation” of part or all of an employer’s business, for purposes of paragraph §639.3(h)(4), means that some definable business, whether customer orders, product lines, or operations, is transferred to a different site of employment and that transfer results in a plant closing or mass layoff.

(g) *Unit of local government*. The term “unit of local government” means any general purpose political subdivision of a State, which has the power to levy taxes and spend funds and which also

has general corporate and police powers. When a covered employment site is located in more than one unit of local government, the employer must give notice to the unit to which it determines it directly paid the highest taxes for the year preceding the year for which the determination is made. All local taxes directly paid to the local government should be aggregated for this purpose.

(h) *Part-time employee.* The term “part-time” employee means an employee who is employed for an average of fewer than 20 hours per week or who has been employed for fewer than 6 of the 12 months preceding the date on which notice is required, including workers who work full-time. This term may include workers who would traditionally be understood as “seasonal” employees. The period to be used for calculating whether a worker has worked “an average of fewer than 20 hours per week” is the shorter of the actual time the worker has been employed or the most recent 90 days.

(i) *Single site of employment.* (1) A single site of employment can refer to either a single location or a group of contiguous locations. Groups of structures which form a campus or industrial park, or separate facilities across the street from one another, may be considered a single site of employment.

(2) There may be several single sites of employment within a single building, such as an office building, if separate employers conduct activities within such a building. For example, an office building housing 50 different businesses will contain 50 single sites of employment. The offices of each employer will be its single site of employment.

(3) Separate buildings or areas which are not directly connected or in immediate proximity may be considered a single site of employment if they are in reasonable geographic proximity, used for the same purpose, and share the same staff and equipment. An example is an employer who manages a number of warehouses in an area but who regularly shifts or rotates the same employees from one building to another.

(4) Non-contiguous sites in the same geographic area which do not share the same staff or operational purpose

should not be considered a single site. For example, assembly plants which are located on opposite sides of a town and which are managed by a single employer are separate sites if they employ different workers.

(5) Contiguous buildings owned by the same employer which have separate management, produce different products, and have separate workforces are considered separate single sites of employment.

(6) For workers whose primary duties require travel from point to point, who are outstationed, or whose primary duties involve work outside any of the employer’s regular employment sites (e.g., railroad workers, bus drivers, salespersons), the single site of employment to which they are assigned as their home base, from which their work is assigned, or to which they report will be the single site in which they are covered for WARN purposes.

(7) Foreign sites of employment are not covered under WARN. U.S. workers at such sites are counted to determine whether an employer is covered as an employer under § 639.3(a).

(8) The term “single site of employment” may also apply to truly unusual organizational situations where the above criteria do not reasonably apply. The application of this definition with the intent to evade the purpose of the Act to provide notice is not acceptable.

(j) *Facility or operating unit.* The term “facility” refers to a building or buildings. The term “operating unit” refers to an organizationally or operationally distinct product, operation, or specific work function within or across facilities at the single site.

(k) *State dislocated worker unit.* The term “State dislocated worker unit” means a unit designated or created in each State by the Governor under title III of the Job Training Partnership Act, as amended by EDWAA.

(l) *State.* For the purpose of WARN, the term “State” includes the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

§ 639.4 Who must give notice?

Section 3(a) of WARN states that “an employer shall not order a plant closing or mass layoff until the end of a 60-

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day period after the employer serves written notice of such an order * * *.” Therefore, an employer who is anticipating carrying out a plant closing or mass layoff is required to give notice to affected employees or their representative(s), the State dislocated worker unit and the chief elected official of a unit of local government. (See definitions in § 639.3 of this part.)

(a) It is the responsibility of the employer to decide the most appropriate person within the employer’s organization to prepare and deliver the notice to affected employees or their representative(s), the State dislocated worker unit and the chief elected official of a unit of local government. In most instances, this may be the local site plant manager, the local personnel director or a labor relations officer.

(b) An employer who has previously announced and carried out a short-term layoff (6 months or less) which is being extended beyond 6 months due to business circumstances (including unforeseeable changes in price or cost) not reasonably foreseeable at the time of the initial layoff is required to give notice when it becomes reasonably foreseeable that the extension is required. A layoff extending beyond 6 months from the date the layoff commenced for any other reason shall be treated as an employment loss from the date of its commencement.

(c) In the case of the sale of part or all of a business, section 2(b)(1) of WARN defines who the “employer” is. The seller is responsible for providing notice of any plant closing or mass layoff which takes place up to and including the effective date (time) of the sale, and the buyer is responsible for providing notice of any plant closing or mass layoff that takes place thereafter. Affected employees are always entitled to notice; at all times the employer is responsible for providing notice.

(1) If the seller is made aware of any definite plans on the part of the buyer to carry out a plant closing or mass layoff within 60 days of purchase, the seller may give notice to affected employees as an agent of the buyer, if so empowered. If the seller does not give notice, the buyer is, nevertheless, responsible to give notice. If the seller gives notice as the buyer’s agent, the

responsibility for notice still remains with the buyer.

(2) It may be prudent for the buyer and seller to determine the impacts of the sale on workers, and to arrange between them for advance notice to be given to affected employees or their representative(s), if a mass layoff or plant closing is planned.

§ 639.5 When must notice be given?

(a) *General rule.* (1) With certain exceptions discussed in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) of this section and in § 639.9 of this part, notice must be given at least 60 calendar days prior to any planned plant closing or mass layoff, as defined in these regulations. When all employees are not terminated on the same date, the date of the first individual termination within the statutory 30-day or 90-day period triggers the 60-day notice requirement. A worker’s last day of employment is considered the date of that worker’s layoff. The first and each subsequent group of terminatees are entitled to a full 60 days’ notice. In order for an employer to decide whether issuing notice is required, the employer should—

(i) Look ahead 30 days and behind 30 days to determine whether employment actions both taken and planned will, in the aggregate for any 30-day period, reach the minimum numbers for a plant closing or a mass layoff and thus trigger the notice requirement; and

(ii) Look ahead 90 days and behind 90 days to determine whether employment actions both taken and planned each of which separately is not of sufficient size to trigger WARN coverage will, in the aggregate for any 90-day period, reach the minimum numbers for a plant closing or a mass layoff and thus trigger the notice requirement. An employer is not, however, required under section 3(d) to give notice if the employer demonstrates that the separate employment losses are the result of separate and distinct actions and causes, and are not an attempt to evade the requirements of WARN.

(2) The point in time at which the number of employees is to be measured for the purpose of determining coverage is the date the first notice is required to be given. If this “snapshot” of the number of employees employed

on that date is clearly unrepresentative of the ordinary or average employment level, then a more representative number can be used to determine coverage. Examples of unrepresentative employment levels include cases when the level is near the peak or trough of an employment cycle or when large upward or downward shifts in the number of employees occur around the time notice is to be given. A more representative number may be an average number of employees over a recent period of time or the number of employees on an alternative date which is more representative of normal employment levels. Alternative methods cannot be used to evade the purpose of WARN, and should only be used in unusual circumstances.

(b) *Transfers.* (1) Notice is not required in certain cases involving transfers, as described under the definition of “employment loss” at § 639.3(f) of this part.

(2) An offer of reassignment to a different site of employment should not be deemed to be a “transfer” if the new job constitutes a constructive discharge.

(3) The meaning of the term “reasonable commuting distance” will vary with local and industry conditions. In determining what is a “reasonable commuting distance”, consideration should be given to the following factors: geographic accessibility of the place of work, the quality of the roads, customarily available transportation, and the usual travel time.

(4) In cases where the transfer is beyond reasonable commuting distance, the employer may become liable for failure to give notice if an offer to transfer is not accepted within 30 days of the offer or of the closing or layoff (whichever is later). Depending upon when the offer of transfer was made by the employer, the normal 60-day notice period may have expired and the plant closing or mass layoff may have occurred. An employer is, therefore, well advised to provide 60-day advance notice as part of the transfer offer.

(c) *Temporary employment.* (1) No notice is required if the closing is of a temporary facility, or if the closing or layoff is the result of the completion of a particular project or undertaking,

and the affected employees were hired with the understanding that their employment was limited to the duration of the facility or the project or undertaking.

(2) Employees must clearly understand at the time of hire that their employment is temporary. When such understandings exist will be determined by reference to employment contracts, collective bargaining agreements, or employment practices of an industry or a locality, but the burden of proof will lie with the employer to show that the temporary nature of the project or facility was clearly communicated should questions arise regarding the temporary employment understandings.

(3) Employers in agriculture and construction frequently hire workers for harvesting, processing, or for work on a particular building or project. Such work may be seasonal but recurring. Such work falls under this exemption if the workers understood at the time they were hired that their work was temporary. In uncertain situations, it may be prudent for employers to clarify temporary work understandings in writing when workers are hired. The same employers may also have permanent employees who work on a variety of jobs and tasks continuously through most of the calendar year. Such employees are not included under this exemption. Giving written notice that a project is temporary will not convert permanent employment into temporary work, making jobs exempt from WARN.

(4) Certain jobs may be related to a specific contract or order. Whether such jobs are temporary depends on whether the contract or order is part of a long-term relationship. For example, an aircraft manufacturer hires workers to produce a standard airplane for the U.S. fleet under a contract with the U.S. Air Force with the expectation that its contract will continue to be renewed during the foreseeable future. The employees of this manufacturer would not be considered temporary.

(d) *Strikes or lockouts.* The statute provides an exemption for strikes and lockouts which are not intended to evade the requirements of the Act. A

lockout occurs when, for tactical or defensive reasons during the course of collective bargaining or during a labor dispute, an employer lawfully refuses to utilize some or all of its employees for the performance of available work. A lockout not related to collective bargaining which is intended as a subterfuge to evade the Act does not qualify for this exemption. A plant closing or mass layoff at a site of employment where a strike or lockout is taking place, which occurs for reasons unrelated to a strike or lockout, is not covered by this exemption. An employer need not give notice when permanently replacing a person who is deemed to be an economic striker under the National Labor Relations Act. Non-striking employees at the same single site of employment who experience a covered employment loss as a result of a strike are entitled to notice; however, situations in which a strike or lockout affects non-striking employees at the same plant may constitute an unforeseeable business circumstance, as discussed in § 639.9, and reduced notice may apply. Similarly, the “faltering company” exception, also discussed in § 639.9 may apply in strike situations. Where a union which is on strike represents more than one bargaining unit at the single site, non-strikers includes the non-striking bargaining unit(s). Notice also is due to those workers who are not a part of the bargaining unit(s) which is involved in the labor negotiations that led to the lockout. Employees at other plants which have not been struck, but at which covered plant closings or mass layoffs occur as a direct or indirect result of a strike or lockout are not covered by the strike/lockout exemption. The unforeseeable business circumstances exception to 60 days’ notice also may apply to these closings or layoffs at other plants.

§ 639.6 Who must receive notice?

Section 3(a) of WARN provides for notice to each representative of the affected employees as of the time notice is required to be given or, if there is no such representative at that time, to each affected employee. Notice also must be served on the State dislocated worker unit and the chief elected official of the unit of local government

within which a closing or layoff is to occur. Section 2(b)(1) of the Act states that “any person who is an employee of the seller (other than a parttime employee) as of the effective date [time] of the sale shall be considered an employee of the purchaser immediately after the effective date [time] of the sale.” This provision preserves the notice rights of the employees of a business that has been sold, but creates no other employment rights. Although a technical termination of the seller’s employees may be deemed to have occurred when a sale becomes effective, WARN notice is only required where the employees, in fact, experience a covered employment loss.

(a) *Representative(s) of affected employees.* Written notice is to be served upon the chief elected officer of the exclusive representative(s) or bargaining agent(s) of affected employees at the time of the notice. If this person is not the same as the officer of the local union(s) representing affected employees, it is recommended that a copy also be given to the local union official(s).

(b) *Affected employees.* Notice is required to be given to employees who may reasonably be expected to experience an employment loss. This includes employees who will likely lose their jobs because of bumping rights or other factors, to the extent that such workers can be identified at the time notice is required to be given. If, at the time notice is required to be given, the employer cannot identify the employee who may reasonably be expected to experience an employment loss due to the elimination of a particular position, the employer must provide notice to the incumbent in that position. While part-time employees are not counted in determining whether plant closing or mass layoff thresholds are reached, such workers are due notice.

(c) *State dislocated worker unit.* Notice is to be served upon the State dislocated worker unit. Since the States are restructuring to implement training under EDWAA, service of notice upon the State Governor constitutes service upon the State dislocated worker unit until such time as the Governor makes public State procedures for serving notice to this unit.

(d) *Chief elected official of the unit of local government.* The identity of the chief elected official will vary according to the local government structure. In the case of elected boards, the notice is to be served upon the board's chairperson.

§ 639.7 What must the notice contain?

(a) *Notice must be specific.* (1) All notice must be specific.

(2) Where voluntary notice has been given more than 60 days in advance, but does not contain all of the required elements set out in this section, the employer must ensure that all of the information required by this section is provided in writing to the parties listed in § 639.6 at least 60 days in advance of a covered employment action.

(3) Notice may be given conditional upon the occurrence or nonoccurrence of an event, such as the renewal of a major contract, only when the event is definite and the consequences of its occurrence or nonoccurrence will necessarily, in the normal course of business, lead to a covered plant closing or mass layoff less than 60 days after the event. For example, if the non-renewal of a major contract will lead to the closing of the plant that produces the articles supplied under the contract 30 days after the contract expires, the employer may give notice at least 60 days in advance of the projected closing date which states that if the contract is not renewed, the plant closing will occur on the projected date. The notice must contain each of the elements set out in this section.

(4) The information provided in the notice shall be based on the best information available to the employer at the time the notice is served. It is not the intent of the regulations, that errors in the information provided in a notice that occur because events subsequently change or that are minor, inadvertent errors are to be the basis for finding a violation of WARN.

(b) As used in this section, the term "date" refers to a specific date or to a 14-day period during which a separation or separations are expected to occur. If separations are planned according to a schedule, the schedule should indicate the specific dates on which or the beginning date of each 14-

day period during which any separations are expected to occur. Where a 14-day period is used, notice must be given at least 60 days in advance of the first day of the period.

(c) Notice to each representative of affected employees is to contain:

(1) The name and address of the employment site where the plant closing or mass layoff will occur, and the name and telephone number of a company official to contact for further information;

(2) A statement as to whether the planned action is expected to be permanent or temporary and, if the entire plant is to be closed, a statement to that effect;

(3) The expected date of the first separation and the anticipated schedule for making separations;

(4) The job titles of positions to be affected and the names of the workers currently holding affected jobs.

The notice may include additional information useful to the employees such as information on available dislocated worker assistance, and, if the planned action is expected to be temporary, the estimated duration, if known.

(d) Notice to each affected employee who does not have a representative is to be written in language understandable to the employees and is to contain:

(1) A statement as to whether the planned action is expected to be permanent or temporary and, if the entire plant is to be closed, a statement to that effect;

(2) The expected date when the plant closing or mass layoff will commence and the expected date when the individual employee will be separated;

(3) An indication whether or not bumping rights exist;

(4) The name and telephone number of a company official to contact for further information.

The notice may include additional information useful to the employees such as information on available dislocated worker assistance, and, if the planned action is expected to be temporary, the estimated duration, if known.

(e) The notices separately provided to the State dislocated worker unit and to the chief elected official of the unit of local government are to contain:

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(1) The name and address of the employment site where the plant closing or mass layoff will occur, and the name and telephone number of a company official to contact for further information;

(2) A statement as to whether the planned action is expected to be permanent or temporary and, if the entire plant is to be closed, a statement to that effect;

(3) The expected date of the first separation, and the anticipated schedule for making separations;

(4) The job titles of positions to be affected, and the number of affected employees in each job classification;

(5) An indication as to whether or not bumping rights exist;

(6) The name of each union representing affected employees, and the name and address of the chief elected officer of each union.

The notice may include additional information useful to the employees such as a statement of whether the planned action is expected to be temporary and, if so, its expected duration.

(f) As an alternative to the notices outlined in paragraph (e) above, an employer may give notice to the State dislocated worker unit and to the unit of local government by providing them with a written notice stating the name of address of the employment site where the plant closing or mass layoff will occur; the name and telephone number of a company official to contact for further information; the expected date of the first separation; and the number of affected employees. The employer is required to maintain the other information listed in § 639.7(e) on site and readily accessible to the State dislocated worker unit and to the unit of general local government. Should this information not be available when requested, it will be deemed a failure to give required notice.

§ 639.8 How is the notice served?

Any reasonable method of delivery to the parties listed under § 639.6 of this part which is designed to ensure receipt of notice of least 60 days before separation is acceptable (e.g., first class mail, personal delivery with optional signed receipt). In the case of notification directly to affected em-

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ployees, insertion of notice into pay envelopes is another viable option. A ticketed notice, *i.e.*, preprinted notice regularly included in each employee's pay check or pay envelope, does not meet the requirements of WARN.

§ 639.9 When may notice be given less than 60 days in advance?

Section 3(b) of WARN sets forth three conditions under which the notification period may be reduced to less than 60 days. The employer bears the burden of proof that conditions for the exceptions have been met. If one of the exceptions is applicable, the employer must give as much notice as is practicable to the union, non-represented employees, the State dislocated worker unit, and the unit of local government and this may, in some circumstances, be notice after the fact. The employer must, at the time notice actually is given, provide a brief statement of the reason for reducing the notice period, in addition to the other elements set out in § 639.7.

(a) The exception under section 3(b)(1) of WARN, termed "faltering company", applies to plant closings but not to mass layoffs and should be narrowly construed. To qualify for reduced notice under this exception:

(1) An employer must have been actively seeking capital or business at the time that 60-day notice would have been required. That is, the employer must have been seeking financing or refinancing through the arrangement of loans, the issuance of stocks, bonds, or other methods of internally generated financing; or the employer must have been seeking additional money, credit, or business through any other commercially reasonable method. The employer must be able to identify specific actions taken to obtain capital or business.

(2) There must have been a realistic opportunity to obtain the financing or business sought.

(3) The financing or business sought must have been sufficient, if obtained, to have enabled the employer to avoid or postpone the shutdown. The employer must be able to objectively demonstrate that the amount of capital or the volume of new business sought would have enabled the employer to

keep the facility, operating unit, or site open for a reasonable period of time.

(4) The employer reasonably and in good faith must have believed that giving the required notice would have precluded the employer from obtaining the needed capital or business. The employer must be able to objectively demonstrate that it reasonably thought that a potential customer or source of financing would have been unwilling to provide the new business or capital if notice were given, that is, if the employees, customers, or the public were aware that the facility, operating unit, or site might have to close. This condition may be satisfied if the employer can show that the financing or business source would not choose to do business with a troubled company or with a company whose workforce would be looking for other jobs. The actions of an employer relying on the “faltering company” exception will be viewed in a company-wide context. Thus, a company with access to capital markets or with cash reserves may not avail itself of this exception by looking solely at the financial condition of the facility, operating unit, or site to be closed.

(b) The “unforeseeable business circumstances” exception under section 3(b)(2)(A) of WARN applies to plant closings and mass layoffs caused by business circumstances that were not reasonably foreseeable at the time that 60-day notice would have been required.

(1) An important indicator of a business circumstance that is not reasonably foreseeable is that the circumstance is caused by some sudden, dramatic, and unexpected action or condition outside the employer’s control. A principal client’s sudden and unexpected termination of a major contract with the employer, a strike at a major supplier of the employer, and an unanticipated and dramatic major economic downturn might each be considered a business circumstance that is not reasonably foreseeable. A government ordered closing of an employment site that occurs without prior notice also may be an unforeseeable business circumstance.

(2) The test for determining when business circumstances are not reasonably foreseeable focuses on an employ-

er’s business judgment. The employer must exercise such commercially reasonable business judgment as would a similarly situated employer in predicting the demands of its particular market. The employer is not required, however, to accurately predict general economic conditions that also may affect demand for its products or services.

(c) The “natural disaster” exception in section 3(b)(2)(B) of WARN applies to plant closings and mass layoffs due to any form of a natural disaster.

(1) Floods, earthquakes, droughts, storms, tidal waves or tsunamis and similar effects of nature are natural disasters under this provision.

(2) To qualify for this exception, an employer must be able to demonstrate that its plant closing or mass layoff is a direct result of a natural disaster.

(3) While a disaster may preclude full or any advance notice, such notice as is practicable, containing as much of the information required in §639.7 as is available in the circumstances of the disaster still must be given, whether in advance or after the fact of an employment loss caused by a natural disaster.

(4) Where a plant closing or mass layoff occurs as an indirect result of a natural disaster, the exception does not apply but the “unforeseeable business circumstance” exception described in paragraph (b) of this section may be applicable.

§ 639.10 When may notice be extended?

Additional notice is required when the date or schedule of dates of a planned plant closing or mass layoff is extended beyond the date or the ending date of any 14-day period announced in the original notice as follows:

(a) If the postponement is for less than 60 days, the additional notice should be given as soon as possible to the parties identified in §639.6 and should include reference to the earlier notice, the date (or 14-day period) to which the planned action is postponed, and the reasons for the postponement. The notice should be given in a manner which will provide the information to all affected employees.

(b) If the postponement is for 60 days or more, the additional notice should be treated as new notice subject to the

provisions of §§639.5, 639.6 and 639.7 of this part. Rolling notice, in the sense of routine periodic notice, given whether or not a plant closing or mass layoff is impending, and with the intent to evade the purpose of the Act rather than give specific notice as required by WARN, is not acceptable.

PART 640—STANDARD FOR BENEFIT PAYMENT PROMPTNESS—UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Sec.

- 640.1 Purpose and scope.
- 640.2 Federal law requirements.
- 640.3 Interpretation of Federal law requirements.
- 640.4 Standard for conformity.
- 640.5 Criteria for compliance.
- 640.6 Review of State compliance.
- 640.7 Benefit payment performance plans.
- 640.8 Enforcement of the standard.
- 640.9 Information, reports and studies.

AUTHORITY: Sec. 1102, Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1302); Secretary's order No. 4-75, dated April 16, 1975 (40 FR 18515) (5 U.S.C. 553). Interpret and apply secs. 303(a)(1) and 303(b)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 503(a)(1), 503(b)(2)).

SOURCE: 43 FR 33225, July 28, 1978, unless otherwise noted.

§ 640.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) *Purpose.* (1) Section 303(a)(1) of the Social Security Act requires, for the purposes of title III of that Act, that a State unemployment compensation law include provision for methods of administration of the law that are reasonably calculated to insure the full payment of unemployment compensation when determined under the State law to be due to claimants. The standard in this part is issued to implement section 303(a)(1) in regard to promptness in the payment of unemployment benefits to eligible claimants.

(2) Although the standard applies to the promptness of all benefit payments and the criteria apply directly to the promptness of first benefit payments, it is recognized that adequate performance is contingent upon the prompt determination of eligibility by the State as a condition for the payment or denial of benefits. Accordingly, implicit in prompt performance with respect to benefit payments is the corresponding need for promptness by the State in

making determinations of eligibility. However, applicable Federal laws provide no authority for the Secretary of Labor to determine the eligibility of individuals under a State law.

(b) *Scope.* (1) The standard in this part applies to all State laws approved by the Secretary of Labor under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (section 3304 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 3304), and to the administration of the State laws.

(2) The standard specified in § 640.4 applies to all claims for unemployment compensation. The criteria for State compliance in § 640.5 apply to first payments of unemployment compensation under the State law to eligible claimants following the filing of initial claims and first compensable claims.

[43 FR 33225, July 28, 1978, as amended at 71 FR 35516, June 21, 2006]

§ 640.2 Federal law requirements.

(a) *Conformity.* Section 303(a)(1) of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 503(a)(1), requires that a State law include provision for:

Such methods of administration * * * as are found by the Secretary of Labor to be reasonably calculated to insure full payment of unemployment compensation when due.

(b) *Compliance.* Section 303(b)(2) of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 503(b)(2), provides in part that:

Whenever the Secretary of Labor, after reasonable notice and opportunity for hearing to the State agency charged with the administration of the State law, finds that in the administration of the law there is:

(1) * * *

(2) a failure to comply substantially with any provision specified in subsection (a) of this section;

the Secretary of Labor shall notify such State agency that further payments will not be made to the State until the Secretary of Labor is satisfied that there is no longer any such * * * failure to comply.

Until he is so satisfied, he shall make no further certification to the Secretary of the Treasury with respect to such State * * *.

§ 640.3 Interpretation of Federal law requirements.

(a) *Section 303(a)(1).* The Secretary interprets section 303(a)(1) of the Social Security Act to require that a State law include provision for such methods