

Labour Ministry announces major social security relief to dependents of workers passing away due to COVID-19

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The Ministry of Labour and Employment has announced additional benefits for workers through ESIC and EPFO schemes to address the fear and anxiety of workers about well-being of their family members due to increase in incidences of death due to COVID -19 pandemic. Enhanced social security is sought to be provided to the workers without any additional cost to the employer.

Currently for the Insured Persons (IPs) under ESIC, after death or disablement of the IP due to employment injury a pension equivalent to 90% of average daily wage drawn by the worker is available to the spouse and widowed mother for life long and for children till they attain the age of 25 years. For the female child, the benefit is available till her marriage.

To support the families of Insured Persons (IP) under the ESIC scheme, it has been decided that, all dependent family members of IPs who have been registered in the online portal of the ESIC prior to their diagnosis of COVID disease and subsequent death due to the disease, will be entitled to receive the same benefits and in the same scale as received by the dependents of insured persons who die as a result of employment injury, subject to the following eligibility conditions:

- a. The IP must have been registered on the ESIC online portal at least three months prior to the diagnosis of COVID disease resulting in death.
- b. The IP must have been employed for wages and contributions for at least 78 days should have been paid or payable in respect of deceased IP during a period of one year immediately preceding the diagnosis of COVID disease resulting in death

The IPs, who fulfil the eligibility conditions, and have died due to COVID disease, their dependants will be entitled to receive monthly payment @90% of average daily wages of the insured person during their life. The scheme will be effective for a period of two years from 24.03.2020.

Under the EPFO's Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme all surviving dependent family members of the members of this scheme are eligible to avail benefits of EDLI in case of death in harness of the member. At present under this scheme, the benefits extended in case of death of a worker are no requirement of minimum service for payment of Gratuity, family pension is paid as per provisions under EPF & MP Act, sickness benefit of 70% of wages for 91 days in a year is paid in the event of worker falling sick and not attending office.

A notification issued by the Ministry has made following amendments to this:

- a. Amount of maximum benefit has been increased from 6 lakhs to 7 lakhs to the family members of deceased employee.
- b. Minimum assurance benefit of ₹2.5 lakh to eligible family members of deceased employees who was a member for a continuous period of 12 months in one or more establishments preceding his death in place of existing provision of continuous employment in the same establishment for 12

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months. It will benefit contractual/casual labourers were losing out on benefits due to condition of continuous one year in one establishment.

c. Restoration of provision of minimum 2.5 lakh compensation retrospectively, i.e., from 15th February 2020.

d. In coming 3 years, the actuary has estimated that eligible family members will get an additional benefit of Rs. 2185 crore from EDLI fund in the years 2021-22 to 2023-24.

e. Number of claims on account of death under the scheme has been estimated to be about 50,000 families per year including increase in claims taking into account estimated death of about 10,000 workers, which may occur due to Covid.

These welfare measures will provide the much needed support to the families of workers who have died due to the COVID-19 disease and will protect them from financial hardships in these challenging times of pandemic.