

Meatpackers and others to lose jobless benefits if they refuse return-to-work orders



Des Moines, May 4 (RHC)-- Iowa's Republican governor has warned furloughed workers they will lose their unemployment benefits if they refuse to return to their jobs once remain-at-home orders are lifted — even if the workers fear injury or death from COVID-19.

Nebraska Republican Governor Pete Ricketts has issued a similar warning. Iowa is planning to allow some restaurants, bars, shops and gyms to reopen at half-capacity beginning Friday, and Nebraska will begin loosening restrictions next week.

Many of the affected workers are employees of giant meatpacking plants that have become the largest coronavirus hot spots in the country. Dozens of workers at a Smithfield plant in Crete, Nebraska, walked off the job Wednesday in an unsanctioned work stoppage after Smithfield reversed a decision to close the facility.

In Weld County, Colorado, an enormous JBS pork plant has reopened, even though a fifth employee has died from COVID-19. The plant reopened even though JBS managers have not tested all of its employees for the disease as they had promised.

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