

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Jan. 7, 2011

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Idaho Jobless Rate Rises for Fifth Straight Month, Exceeds National Rate

Idaho's forecasted seasonally adjusted unemployment rate edged upward for the fifth straight month in December, leaving a record 71,900 workers without jobs.

A tenth of a percentage point increase to 9.5 percent ran counter to a four-tenths drop in the national rate to 9.4 percent and broke a nine-year-two-month streak where Idaho's rate was lower than the national rate. December's rate matches the recession-high set last February and is just one-tenth of a percentage point below the record in December 1982 through February 1983.

December's forecasted rate and preliminary rates for the rest of 2010 will be subjected to review over the next two months as additional economic information becomes available and is analyzed and adjusted to more accurately reflect the economic circumstances of 2010. Based on current data, Idaho's unemployment rate for 2010 averaged a record 9.2 percent, breaking the previous record of 9 percent in 1982 set in the midst of a double-dip recession. New hiring by employers statewide in 2010 was at its lowest level since businesses began reporting in 1997 - 141,100.

The number of nonfarm jobs fell as expected from November to December. The percentage decline was in line with a five-year average, depressed by the extended recession. Only information, financial services, leisure and hospitality performed above normal. Employers hired fewer than 11,000 new workers in December, the first month new hiring has slipped below 11,000 since March.

Employment throughout Idaho fell another 1,600 from November to 684,200. It was the seventh straight monthly decline, reducing total employment by 9,000 since May.

December also marked for the second time since 1988 a decline from November in the number of Idahoans either with jobs or looking for jobs, a sign that some discouraged workers may have dropped out of the labor force. December's Conference Board report estimates there are more than three unemployed Idaho workers for every job opening.

More than \$52 million in unemployment benefits was paid to a weekly average of 40,000 jobless workers during December. The percentage of workers using up their entire allotment of regular state unemployment benefits without finding a new job reached 52.9 percent in November, matching a record high exhaustion rate set in May 1983.

Compared to a year earlier, 1,600 more people were at work in Idaho as 2010 ended but 3,600 more workers were without jobs. Last year December's unemployment rate was 9.1 percent, four-tenths lower than last month. Nonfarm jobs average 1.3 percent lower than in 2009, essentially remaining at the relative level that began last spring.

County, city and metropolitan area unemployment rates for December will be released Jan. 21.

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Seasonally Adjusted Forecast Data

	12/10	11/10	12/09
Civilian Labor Force	756,100	756,600	751,200
Unemployment	71,900	70,800	68,300
% Labor Force Unemployed	9.5	9.4	9.1
Total Employment	684,200	685,850	682,900

Unadjusted Forecast Data

	12/10	11/10	12/09
Civilian Labor Force	751,800	755,000	747,300
Unemployment	71,900	71,200	68,400
% Labor Force Unemployed	9.6	9.4	9.2
Total Employment	679,900	683,800	678,900

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