

NEWS RELEASE

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May Unemployment Rate Edges Up to 3.9%

An increase in people looking for work nudged Idaho's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate up slightly in May, from 3.8 to 3.9 percent.

Nationally, unemployment also edged upward to 5.5 percent, allowing Idaho to continue a five and a half year streak of remaining well below the national average.

May is the fifth consecutive month Idaho's labor force and the state participation rate increased, taking some pressure off a tight labor market. Another 3,800 people were added to the labor force, pushing the total up to 795,445, while the state's labor participation rate - the percentage of working-age adults on the job or looking for work - grew to 64.2 percent.

Employers continued a healthy hiring trend by adding more than 3,000 people to their payrolls, increasing the state's total employment to 764,460, another record-breaking level. Between January and May of this year, total employment was up by 17,800 or an average of 2.4 percent, the highest numeric increase and percentage change on record for that time period.

Month to month, Idaho's nonfarm job growth continued across all sectors in May, up 1.2 percent, with the largest gains in construction, trade and transportation, retail, leisure and government. Annually, nonfarm jobs maintained an average growth rate of 2.5 percent, with construction and financial activities continuing April's trend and showing year-over-year gains of 7.8 percent and 4.8 percent, respectively.

The Conference Board, a Washington, D.C., think-tank, estimates slightly more than one unemployed worker for every Idaho job opening in May, roughly the same ratio as April's labor market conditions.

Unemployment insurance payments and the number of people collecting benefits also continued to decline. Annually, benefit payments were down 16.2 percent - from \$2.1 million a year ago to \$1.8 million for May of this year. The number of claimants also dropped by just over 20 percent from a weekly average of 7,800 a year ago to 6,200.

It's been just under one year since any of Idaho's 44 counties reported a double-digit unemployment rate. As economic conditions improve across the state, 24 counties had rates at or below the statewide rate, four more than last month.

Clearwater had the state's highest county unemployment rate at 7 percent, followed by Shoshone County at 6.7 percent. Fremont and Madison counties reported the lowest rate at 3 percent each.

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Boise and Idaho Falls Metropolitan Statistical Areas were the only MSAs to post unemployment rates below the state rate at 3.7 and 3.5 percent, respectively. Coeur d'Alene had the highest unemployment rate among the metro areas at 4.4 percent in May.

Seasonally Adjusted Data	05/15	04/15	05/14
Civilian Labor Force	795,400	791,600	777,300
Unemployment	31,000	30,200	38,100
% Labor Force Unemployed	3.9	3.8	4.9
Total Employment	764,400	761,400	739,200
Unadjusted Forecast Data			
Civilian Labor Force	798,200	791,000	778,000
Unemployment	28,100	32,300	34,500
% Labor Force Unemployed	3.5	4.1	4.4
Total Employment	770,100	758,700	743,500

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