

For Immediate Release: Jan. 20, 2016

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Idaho Unemployment Rate Decreases to 3.7% in December

Idaho's seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate dropped to 3.7 percent in December - after five straight months at 3.8 percent.

Employment increased by 300 to 784,200. Meanwhile, the state's labor force decreased by 200, pushing the number of unemployed Idahoans down by 500 people to 30,000.

Month-to-month, Idaho's seasonally-adjusted total nonfarm payroll jobs declined by 500 jobs to 700,700. Gains in manufacturing, financial activities, professional and business services and other services were offset and slightly exceeded by the number of jobs lost in natural resources, construction, and trade and transportation.

Year-over-year, Idaho's total nonfarm job growth for December showed a net gain of 13,300, or 1.9 percent, with all sectors except natural resources showing gains.

Nationally, the unemployment rate increased by one-tenth of a point to 4.7 percent.

Idaho's labor force participation rate remained steady at 64 percent while nationally, the rate increased slightly to 62.7 percent.

According to the Conference Board, a Washington, D.C., think tank, there were more than 20,700 online postings for Idaho jobs in December. Of those, 4,500 were classified by department analysts as hard-to-fill. Health care jobs account for 24.3 percent of those jobs and included physicians, surgeons, psychiatrists, occupational and physical therapists, and support positions. By volume, registered nurses and truck drivers maintained the first and second spots for the largest number of hard-to-fill jobs.

Idaho's monthly unemployment benefit payouts were up 1.1 percent - from \$2.48 million a year ago to \$2.5 million for December 2016. For calendar year 2016, Idaho paid out \$102.9 million in regular unemployment insurance benefits - 1.2 percent less than the \$104.3 million paid in 2015.

Twenty-three of Idaho's 44 counties had unemployment rates above the state rate. Madison County continued to experience the lowest unemployment rate at 2.2 percent. Five counties experienced rates at or above 6 percent: Clearwater (7.5 percent), Shoshone (7.4 percent), Lewis (7.2 percent), Benewah (6.5 percent) and Lemhi (6 percent).

The Idaho Falls metropolitan statistical area (MSA) reported the lowest unemployment rate of all MSAs at 2.9 percent, down from 3.1 percent one year earlier. The Coeur d'Alene MSA experienced the highest unemployment rate among the MSAs at 4.6 percent, down from 4.9 percent in the previous December.

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Details on Idaho's unemployment picture can be found at lmi.idaho.gov.

Seasonally Adjusted Data	Dec-16	Nov-16	Dec-15
Civilian Labor Force	814,200	814,400	804,600
Unemployment	30,000	30,500	31,700
% Labor Force Unemployed	3.7	3.8	3.9
Total Employment	784,200	783,900	772,900

Unadjusted Forecast Data			
Civilian Labor Force	805,700	810,600	801,800
Unemployment	29,200	30,400	31,600
% Labor Force Unemployed	3.6	3.8	3.9
Total Employment	776,500	780,200	770,200

Editors and news directors:

Idaho's 2016 average annual unemployment rate and labor force data will be released Friday, Feb. 28. Benchmarked nonfarm job data for 2016 will be released on Monday, March 13, concurrent with the January 2017 employment situation. The February 2017 employment situation will be released on Friday, March 24.

Changes in the release dates for the monthly unemployment rate are due to "benchmark revisions" performed by the department and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics during January and February. Benchmark revisions represent a once-a-year re-anchoring of sample-based employment estimates to full employment counts. These counts are derived from unemployment insurance tax records nearly all employers are required to file with state workforce agencies like the Idaho Department of Labor. *Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.*

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