

The Vermont Labor Market

Departments of Employment & Training / Labor & Industry

Vermont Department of

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Employment & Training

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Commissioner's Message

It's My Turn

Jobs Will Go Where Workforce Skills Are Growing

If we in Vermont really want to build career opportunities and economic well-being for our own and our children's future, the single most important thing we can do is to develop the quality and sophistication of our state's workforce.

That's the conclusion of *Opening Opportunities*, the first report of the Vermont Workforce Education and Training Consortium. The consortium is a promising new partnership that includes all state's public providers of job-related, skill-building programs for adults. Its excellent report came out last month, about the same time that I started my new job as Commissioner of the Department of Employment and Training.

Because I had been director of one of Vermont's regional Workforce Investment Boards, and had also worked closely with many business leaders as director of the United Way of Addison County, I knew the Workforce Consortium's conclusions were right on the money. So in the past few weeks, as I have spoken with legislators and testified before State House committees, I have pressed

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The Edge

Tax Rates

Employers may see an increase in their UI tax rates for wages paid during the quarter ending in June, the last quarter of the current tax rate year. The current tax rates reflect action taken during the 2002 legislative session when the Legislature enacted Act 143. While this Act addressed a number of fees for various state services, it also included five sections related to Unemployment Insurance, two of which are discussed in this article.

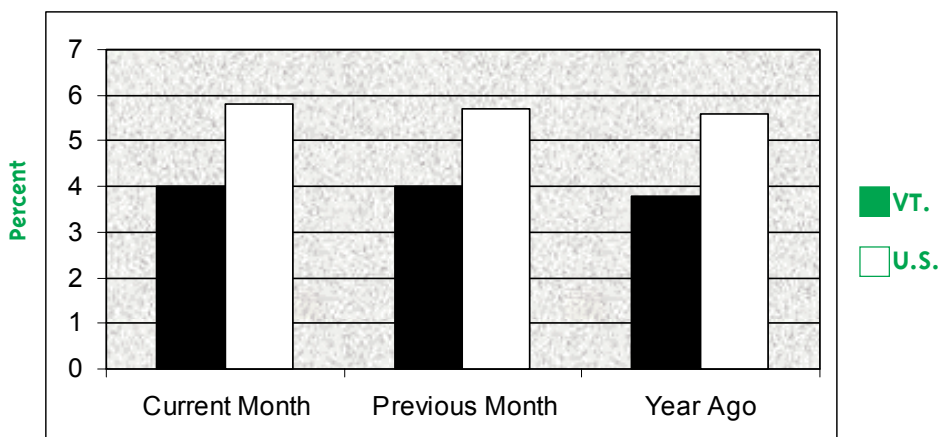
Section 65b of Act 143 reduced the contribution rate for the first three calendar quarters of the current rate year, which began on July 1, 2002 and will end June 30, 2003. This reduction was accomplished by preventing an automatic shift from Tax Schedule I to Tax Schedule II. The tax reduction was also limited to \$7.5 million.

Section 65a provided for an additional \$18 a week to all eligible claimants, for the period July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003, or until a maximum of \$6 million is distributed. Based on our records, it appears the \$6 million will be expended by the end of April, 2003, after which claimants will no longer receive this additional benefit.

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Unemployment Rates Vermont and U.S.

February (SA) 2003 Rates
VT 4.0% • U.S. 5.8%



Commissioner's Message –

(continued from front page)

Opening Opportunities on our state's decisionmakers as often as I could.

"As with much of the nation," the report declares, "our state faces a widening gap between the increasingly sophisticated skills that employers need and those our adult workforce has."

"The demands are growing: state projections are that Vermont businesses will need to find 56,000 new or replacement workers over the next five years. Almost half of those workers, including those filling 46 of the 50 fastest-growing occupations, will need significant training beyond high school."

Vermonters often talk about the jobs we've lost in this struggling economic time. But, most of those jobs were from particular sectors, like manufacturing, that simply aren't going to be big parts of Vermont's economic future.

The real "big picture" is that the modern workforce has been transforming – and for the people who have the skills that employers need, the opportunities are here and will grow. These needed skills vary among workplaces, but they tend to include the capacity to learn and use technology; the ability to work, problem-solve, and be creative in groups; the ability to think and learn continuously; and the capacity to communicate.

If we make a conscious, effective effort to help Vermonters build the skills that the best employers require, we can do much more than just bounce back from a downturn. In the nationwide competition among states to attract the most desirable jobs and employers, with our beautiful landscape, vibrant communities, and hard-working people, Vermont can build a stronger, cleaner economy than we have ever had in the past.

Building a 21st Century System

To achieve this vision – to meet the needs of both employers and individual Vermonters – we have some work to do. We need to build a smoothly

coordinated system of public workforce education and training programs. We have made some major strides toward developing such a system – but we have some distance to go.

Getting us there is a mission of the Workforce Education and Training (WET) Consortium. For the first time in Vermont, the Consortium pulls together around a single table all the state's public providers of workforce education: the Department of Employment & Training, UVM, the Vermont State Colleges, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Department of Education, the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, and the Human Resources Investment Council.

"Without building a new bureaucracy, we're trying to coordinate the services of all the public agencies and groups, so that we're working in concert," says WET Consortium Co-Chair Robert G. Clarke, Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges.

The WET Consortium has proposed a set of linked actions that will take us several major steps toward a 21st century system of workforce development. In its report, the Consortium recommends:

- Carrying out several projects that will get the public providers working together at new levels of coordination, to meet business and individual needs.
- Developing data-management strategies to more usefully plan and assess workforce education and training programs.
- Creating "career ladders," coordinated pathways through the education and training that Vermonters need for targeted, high-demand careers.
- Building a true, web-based, "one-stop shopping" point of entry to the public system of workforce education and training – and guiding people to it with a coordinated marketing and information campaign.

If we continue to take steps like these – if we make a conscious, continuing investment in building the workforce-development system we need – Vermont can become a magnet for clean, creative, desirable employers. Adult Vermonters of all situations and life challenges can gain the chance to build promising, rewarding careers. And, the Vermont of tomorrow can be a place where a thriving economy supports all that we value in this special and beautiful place.

Now that's a vision worth working for.

(As Vermont's new Commissioner of Employment and Training, Anne Ginevan has become Co-Chair of the Workforce Education and Training Consortium, along with Chancellor Robert Clarke of the Vermont State Colleges.)

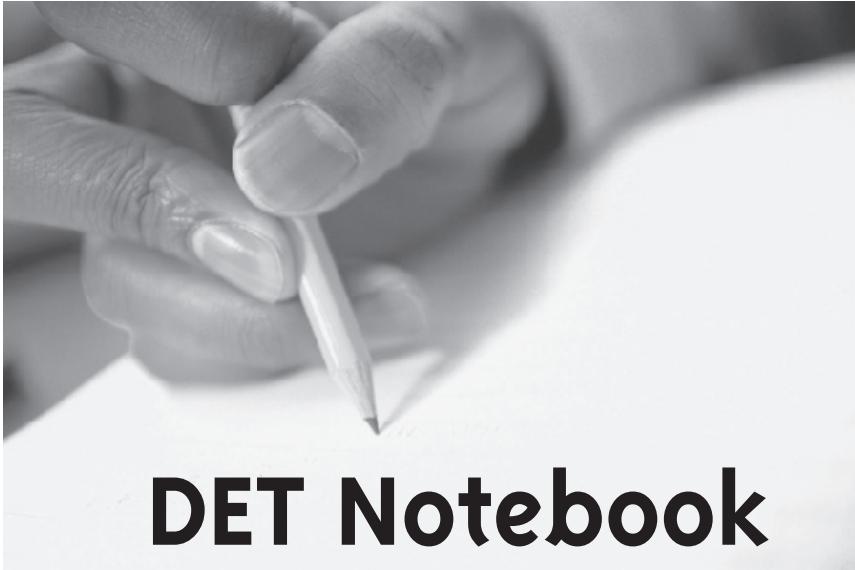
Anne Ginevan

The Edge - *(continued from front page)*

Both provisions occurred as part of an economic stimulus package passed by Congress last year. Because it was a special distribution of federal funds, there is no impact to the UI Trust fund from either the tax cut or the temporary benefit payment. No employer account is charged with the additional \$18 a week payment.

The increase in benefit payments has helped claimants during this economic downturn. While the tax rate reduction during a period of high unemployment is unquestionably of great benefit to employers, an unintended consequence resulted. By limiting the reduction to only the first three quarters of the rate year, employers will have to pay a higher rate for the fourth quarter of the rate year, which is the quarter that begins April 1, 2003 and ends June 30, 2003.

(Continued on back page)



DET Notebook

Breakfast with Sam

Often first time visitors to DET offices are hesitant to ask for help, nervous and embarrassed about being unemployed and confused about what to do and where to go. While all of us make the effort to make folks more comfortable with our service, and empower them to take charge of their reemployment efforts, some people just seem to have a special knack for it.

Sam Booska, Client Services Specialist in the Middlebury DET office is one of those people. While Sam's regular duties include preliminary employment service interviews, job referrals and food stamp work searches, where he really comes into his own is with groups. In today's high tech, fast paced world job seekers often feel something like the Lone Ranger without his trusty sidekick. We tell people they need to "network" to succeed in their job search, but how many of our customers really know how to build their own networks?

Starting with people enrolled in Reemployment Services, Sam worked with Counselor Bridget Corbett to start a weekly networking group. Customers came to meetings to initially learn techniques, labor market information and best practices, but soon found that something more important was beginning to happen. They were beginning to work as a mutual support

group, sharing goals and frustrations and no longer feeling so alone.

This is not to say that they didn't need some incentive to get started. Knowing that people tend to relax and open up more around a table spread with food, Sam began providing snacks: donuts, juice and even chicken wings. Something about buffalo wings at ten o'clock in the morning helps the most reticent begin to open up mentally and emotionally. In no time people began to look forward to the weekly get-togethers, often coming more often than the twice a month required by the Reemployment Services program.

"All I really try to do is make people feel comfortable about being here, and maybe not feel so bad about themselves being unemployed or whatever. Then we just sit around and visit with each other and all of a sudden things get rolling. People who have been coming for a while try to help the new people get comfortable . . . share experiences. At the end of an hour, people don't want to leave."

Manager Dale Piper agrees: "Sam has the uncanny ability to not only relate to all levels of applicants, but helps the most unlikely combinations to relate to one another. His networking groups encompass everyone from day laborers to engineers, and they all provide support, leads and advice to

one another. We have never had such a popular group! One morning, while networking was meeting, I needed to tell Sam something and the conference room was so full that I couldn't get in the door."

Soon, as people from the group moved on to new employment opportunities, they would call in regretting that they would "miss breakfast with Sam". Even so, some still come back to visit, and help. One former participant, now a ship's pilot has come back to conduct mock interviews, give pep talks and generally assist any way he can. The camaraderie developed is something people depend on and hate to walk away from.

At this point the networking group has become so popular Sam has to do a morning and afternoon session to accommodate all comers. Not all of the participants are mandated anymore either. Many are regular job seekers who have heard through the grapevine and want to take advantage of this opportunity to vent, encourage, help and be helped.

Sam also works with groups of students from Northlands Job Corps. These students, all in the first phase of their Job Corps experience come to the local office to learn how to access America's Job Bank, and research employment information in their chosen fields in their home towns. Students come from all over New England to the Job Corps center in Vergennes, most looking for a trade that will help them break out of their old lives into new, productive endeavors. Sam helps them navigate AJB to see what sort of jobs may be waiting for them at home when they graduate, what kind of salary they can hope to make and clarify their occupational goals

Even in these brief encounters he manages to find humor in situations and put people who are in unknown territory at ease. But then, isn't that what customer service is all about?

Economic Spotcheck

Local Unemployment Rates *(Not Seasonally Adjusted)*

Town/City*	Feb. '03	*/Jan. '03	Feb. '02
Barre City	11.9	12.7	10.6
Barre Town	4.4	4.9	4.3
Bennington Town	7.0	7.1	7.1
Brattleboro Town	4.0	4.2	3.8
Burlington City	3.8	3.6	3.7
Colchester Town	3.4	3.3	3.8
Essex Town	3.4	3.5	2.9
Hartford Town	2.2	2.2	2.9
Middlebury Town	3.2	3.4	3.4
Milton Town	5.5	5.8	4.9
Montpelier City	2.7	2.9	3.1
Rutland City	3.4	3.3	4.1
St. Albans City	3.9	4.0	3.8
St. Johnsbury Town	8.9	8.9	8.9
So. Burlington City	3.0	3.2	2.8
Springfield Town	8.1	8.3	6.8

*16 Largest Towns in Vermont

*/January estimates are corrected from previously published data

U.S. CONSUMER PRICE INDEX Base Period (1982 - 1984 = 100)

	Feb. 2003	Jan. 2003	Feb. 2002
All Items Index	183.1	181.7	177.8
Annual Percent Change	3.0	2.6	1.1

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE CPI - The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change in prices over time of a fixed market basket of goods and services. It is based on prices of food, clothing, shelter, fuels, transportation fares, and other items that people buy for day to day living. The CPI shown above represents the U.S. city average for all urban consumers and is not seasonally adjusted.

There is no separate Consumer Price Index for Vermont or any area within the state.

Employment Trends

Total seasonally adjusted February employment fell slightly, dropping by 1,200 from the previous month with 336,400 working Vermonters. This estimate includes all Vermont residents who worked, whether at wage and salary jobs, or as self-employed.

Estimates from the Department's monthly job survey are compiled by industry according to a new classification structure known as the North American Industry Classification system. The NAICS categories better reflect recent technological changes in the economy, but have made it more difficult to forecast seasonal factors for the monthly job estimates. This has added some volatility to the seasonally adjusted job numbers. On a seasonally adjusted basis, the estimated number of nonfarm jobs dropped by 0.5 percent to 301,300 for a loss of 1,600 jobs. Education & health services, which can be difficult to estimate during months associated with high seasonality, due to varying educational calendars, experienced the largest decline losing 2,400 jobs.

The more detailed unadjusted estimates increased by over 1,200 in February, with the largest increase in government education. Both public and private schools rebounded after the winter holiday break period. Manufacturing picked up slightly with computer & electrical equipment

adding 200 jobs in February. Construction lost 300 jobs, which is fairly typical for the time period. Retail trade fell by almost 600, partially reflecting the seasonal downturn.

The preliminary February estimates reflect an annual increase of just under 1.0%. Health care & social assistance provided the largest over the year gain, adding almost 1,800 jobs. Manufacturing, however remained well below February 2002 with job loses totaling 2,800. Computer & electrical equipment manufacturing was the largest contributor within that group, dropping by 1,400.

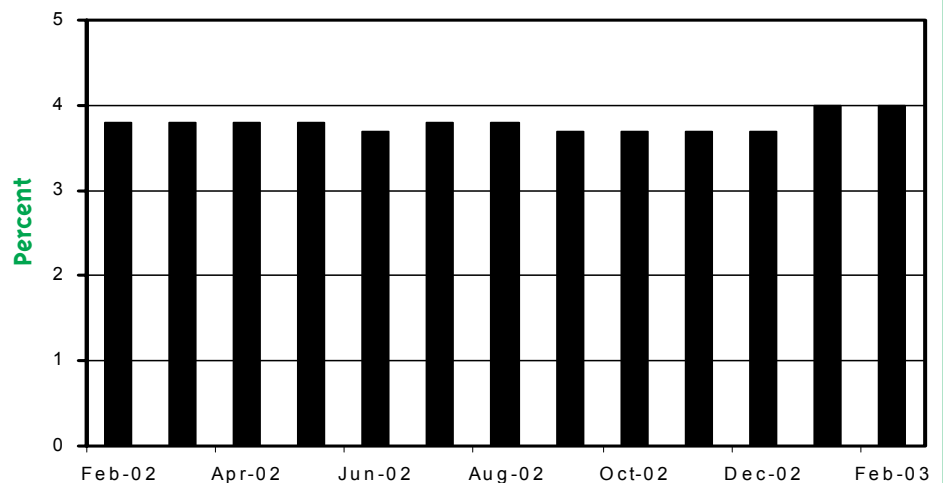
Unemployment Trends

Vermont's seasonally adjusted February unemployment rate of 4.0 percent was unchanged from the revised January rate, with an estimated 13,900 Vermonters unemployed during the month.

The comparable national unemployment rate was 5.8 percent for February, up one tenth of a point from January. Vermont continues to be well under the national rate.

The number of initial claims for Unemployment Insurance filed in February decreased only slightly from the previous month. However, furniture manufacturing experienced a surge in initial claims, reflecting a short-term seasonal shutdown.

Vermont Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate



Labor Force Estimates *(Seasonally Adjusted)*

Vermont	Feb. '03	Jan. '03	Feb. '02	Changes from:	
				Jan. '03	Feb. '02
TOTAL LABOR FORCE¹	350,400	351,800	345,200	-1,400	5,200
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	336,400	337,600	332,300	-1,200	4,100
TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT	13,900	14,200	13,000	-300	900
RATE	4.0	4.0	3.8	0.0	0.2

¹Includes proprietors, professionals, and unpaid family workers.
VCM Regression Methodology

Labor Market Areas *(Not Seasonally Adjusted)*

	Feb. 2003	*Jan. 2003	Feb. 2002		Feb. 2003	*Jan. 2003	Feb. 2002
BARRE-MONTPELIER				MORRISTOWN-STOWE			
Labor Force	41,600	41,750	40,250	Labor Force	20,300	20,050	19,500
Unemployment	2,550	2,650	2,350	Unemployment	1,350	1,350	1,200
Rate	6.1	6.4	5.8	Rate	6.6	6.6	6.0
Employment	39,050	39,100	37,900	Employment	18,950	18,750	18,300
BENNINGTON-MANCHESTER				NEWPORT			
Labor Force	22,100	22,200	21,300	Labor Force	13,600	13,500	13,450
Unemployment	1,200	1,150	1,200	Unemployment	1,500	1,450	1,500
Rate	5.3	5.2	5.5	Rate	10.9	10.8	11.1
Employment	20,900	21,050	20,100	Employment	12,150	12,050	11,950
BURLINGTON				RANDOLPH			
Labor Force	104,900	105,150	104,700	Labor Force	6,400	6,450	6,150
Unemployment	4,050	4,100	3,750	Unemployment	350	400	300
Rate	3.9	3.9	3.6	Rate	5.8	6.2	5.0
Employment	100,850	101,050	100,950	Employment	6,050	6,050	5,850
ENOSBURG				RUTLAND			
Labor Force	10,750	10,500	10,600	Labor Force	30,500	30,650	31,050
Unemployment	950	950	900	Unemployment	1,650	1,650	1,550
Rate	8.9	9.1	8.5	Rate	5.5	5.4	5.0
Employment	9,800	9,550	9,700	Employment	28,850	29,000	29,500
HARTFORD-LEBANON,VT-NH LMA (VT PORTION ONLY)				ST. JOHNSBURY			
Labor Force	29,350	29,300	28,850	Labor Force	15,350	15,200	14,900
Unemployment	850	850	800	Unemployment	1,100	1,150	1,050
Rate	2.8	2.9	2.8	Rate	7.3	7.5	7.0
Employment	28,550	28,450	28,050	Employment	14,250	14,100	13,850
KEENE-BRATTLEBORO,NH-VT LMA (ENTIRE AREA)				SPRINGFIELD			
Labor Force	N/A	58,900	57,750	Labor Force	10,950	10,950	10,500
Unemployment	N/A	1,800	1,800	Unemployment	700	650	600
Rate	N/A	3.0	3.1	Rate	6.2	6.0	5.6
Employment	N/A	57,150	55,950	Employment	10,250	10,250	9,900
MIDDLEBURY				STATEWIDE			
Labor Force	20,150	20,350	19,700	Labor Force	350,400	350,450	344,950
Unemployment	1,000	1,050	1,000	Unemployment	18,100	18,250	16,800
Rate	5.1	5.2	5.0	Rate	5.2	5.2	4.9
Employment	19,100	19,300	18,750	Employment	332,300	332,200	328,150

Monthly estimates are preliminary and subject to revision.

Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.

* January estimates are corrected from previously published data.

Vermont Seasonally Adjusted Nonfarm Employment in Thousands

BY NAICS	Prelim.	Revised	Revised	Changes From:	
	Feb. '03	Jan. '03	Feb. '02	Jan. '03	Feb. '02
Total - All Industries	301.3	302.9	299.6	-1.6	1.7
Private Industries	249.8	250.7	249.0	-0.9	0.8
Construction	15.3	15.0	15.3	0.3	0.0
Manufacturing	39.2	39.1	42.0	0.1	-2.8
Retail Trade*	40.4	39.5	40.1	0.9	0.3
Professional & Business Services	20.6	20.3	19.8	0.3	0.8
Education & Health Services	49.8	52.2	49.2	-2.4	0.6
Leisure & Hospitality*	33.1	33.1	33.2	0.0	-0.1
Total Government	51.5	52.2	50.6	-0.7	0.9

*These estimates are not endorsed by the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics.

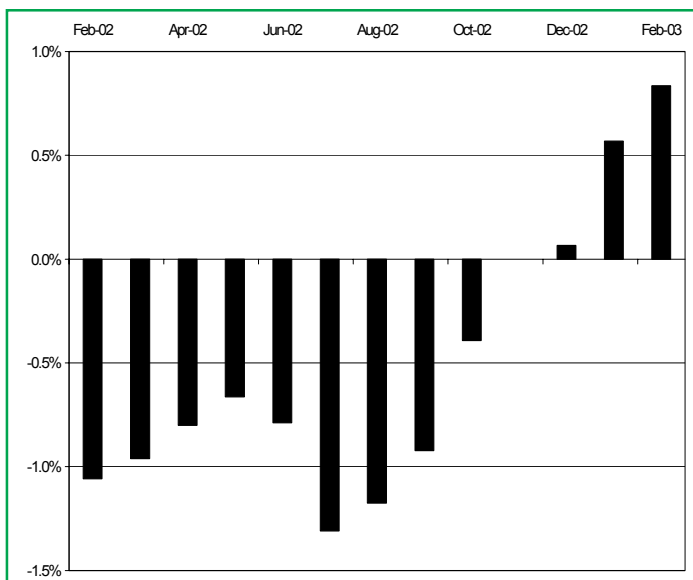
Note: Total - All Industries estimate is seasonally adjusted independently.

All seasonal adjustment performed with X12-ARIMA. Seasonal factors available from DET/LMI on request.

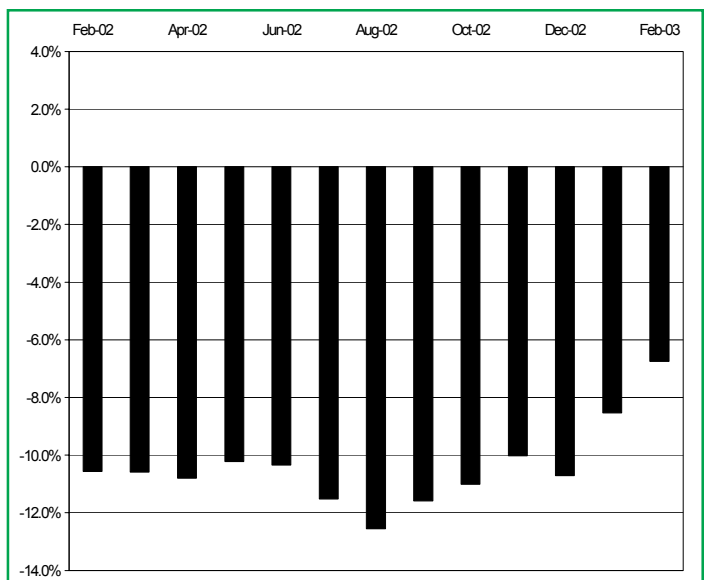
Produced by the Vermont Department of Employment and Training in cooperation with the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, unless otherwise noted.

Vermont Annual Job Growth Not Seasonally Adjusted Data

All Industries



Manufacturing



Nonfarm Employment In Vermont *(Not Seasonally Adjusted)*

Compiled by the Department of Employment and Training in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

INDUSTRY BY NAICS	Prelim.	Revised	Revised	Changes From:	
	Feb. '03	Jan. '03	Feb. '02	Jan. '03	Feb. '02
TOTAL NONFARM	302,150	300,950	299,350	1,200	2,800
TOTAL PRIVATE	248,500	248,550	246,800	-50	1,700
GOODS PRODUCING	52,650	52,800	55,300	-150	-2,650
MANUFACTURING	38,700	38,600	41,500	100	-2,800
Durable Goods	27,600	27,500	30,150	100	-2,550
Computer & Electrical Equipment Mfg.	10,100	9,900	11,500	200	-1,400
Fabricated Metal Product Mfg.	2,800	2,800	2,900	0	-100
Machinery Mfg.	3,100	3,100	3,400	0	-300
Transportation Equipment Mfg.	2,250	2,250	2,500	0	-250
Furniture & Related Product Mfg.	2,450	2,450	2,850	0	-400
Non-Durable Goods	11,100	11,100	11,350	0	-250
Food Mfg.	3,900	4,000	4,000	-100	-100
CONSTRUCTION	13,050	13,350	12,900	-300	150
NATURAL RESOURCES & MINING	900	850	900	50	0
SERVICE-PROVIDING	249,500	248,150	244,050	1,350	5,450
TRADE TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES	58,450	58,950	57,750	-500	700
Wholesale Trade	10,300	10,300	9,850	0	450
Retail Trade	39,500	40,050	39,250	-550	250
Food & Beverage Stores	9,650	9,850	9,600	-200	50
General Merchandise Store	3,250	3,350	3,250	-100	0
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities	8,650	8,600	8,650	50	0
Utilities	1,700	1,700	1,700	0	0
Transportation & Warehousing	6,950	6,900	6,950	50	0
INFORMATION	6,600	6,600	6,650	0	-50
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	13,100	13,100	13,050	0	50
Finance & Insurance	10,100	10,050	10,100	50	0
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	3,000	3,050	2,950	-50	50
PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES	20,000	19,800	19,150	200	850
Professional, Scientific and Technical	12,100	12,100	12,050	0	50
Administrative, Support and Waste	7,550	7,600	6,850	-50	700
EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH SERVICES	51,550	51,350	49,650	200	1,900
Educational Services	12,800	12,400	12,650	400	150
College, Universities and Professional	7,050	6,600	6,950	450	100
Health Care and Social Assistance	38,750	38,950	37,000	-200	1,750
Ambulatory Health Care Services	15,150	15,250	14,650	-100	500
Hospitals	10,200	10,150	9,850	50	350
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	6,650	6,700	6,350	-50	300
LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY	35,900	35,800	35,500	100	400
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	2,900	2,850	3,100	50	-200
Accommodation and Food Services	33,000	32,950	32,400	50	600
Accommodations	15,350	15,500	15,000	-150	350
Hotel & Motels	14,400	14,650	13,800	-250	600
Food Services and Drinking Places	17,650	17,450	17,400	200	250
OTHER SERVICES	10,250	10,150	9,750	100	500
GOVERNMENT	53,650	52,400	52,550	1,250	1,100
Federal Government	6,200	6,200	5,650	0	550
State Government Education	8,350	7,150	8,050	1,200	300
Local Government Education	23,450	23,400	23,350	50	100
Other State Government	9,150	9,150	9,000	0	150
Other Local Government	6,500	6,500	6,500	0	0

Nonfarm Employment By Area *(Not Seasonally Adjusted)*

Note: Monthly estimates are preliminary and subject to revision. See Annual Employment & Earnings for details. Benchmark 3/2002.

Burlington

INDUSTRY BY NAICS	Preliminary	Revised	Revised	Changes From:	
	Feb. '03	Jan. '03	Feb. '02	Jan. '03	Feb. '02
TOTAL NONFARM	106,100	106,000	106,900	100	-800
TOTAL PRIVATE	87,750	88,200	89,000	-450	-1,250
GOODS PRODUCING	19,850	20,350	22,100	-500	-2,250
MANUFACTURING	15,350	15,700	17,300	-350	-1,950
Durable Goods	11,750	12,150	13,550	-400	-1,800
Natural Resources and Mining	4,500	4,650	4,800	-150	-300
SERVICE PROVIDING	86,250	85,650	84,800	600	1,450
TRADE, TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES	20,600	20,800	20,800	-200	-200
Wholesale Trade	3,650	3,650	3,600	0	50
Retail Trade	14,050	14,250	14,250	-200	-200
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	2,900	2,900	2,950	0	-50
INFORMATION	3,050	3,100	3,100	-50	-50
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	5,200	5,150	5,250	50	-50
PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SERVICES	9,800	9,750	8,950	50	850
Professional Scientific and Technical	6,350	6,300	6,050	50	300
EDUCATIONAL & HEALTH SERVICES	17,200	17,250	16,850	-50	350
Health Care and Social Assistance	13,800	13,950	13,400	-150	400
LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY	8,500	8,250	8,450	250	50
Accommodation and Food Services	7,100	7,000	7,150	100	-50
Food Services and Drinking Places	5,850	5,800	5,950	50	-100
OTHER SERVICES	3,550	3,550	3,500	0	50
GOVERNMENT	18,350	17,800	17,900	550	450
Federal Government	3,000	3,000	2,450	0	550
State Government Education	5,650	5,100	5,900	550	-250
Local Government Education	6,050	6,000	6,100	50	-50
Other State Government	1,500	1,500	1,550	0	-50
Other Local Government	2,150	2,200	1,900	-50	250

Barre-Montpelier

TOTAL NONFARM	34,800	34,700	34,050	100	750
TOTAL PRIVATE	26,100	26,150	25,600	-50	500
GOODS PRODUCING	4,350	4,350	4,500	0	-150
Manufacturing	3,100	3,050	3,250	50	-150
Natural Resources & Mining	1,250	1,300	1,250	-50	0
SERVICE-PROVIDING	30,450	30,350	29,550	100	900
TRADE, TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES	6,050	6,100	5,850	-50	200
Wholesale Trade	1,050	1,050	950	0	100
Retail Trade	4,200	4,250	4,100	-50	100
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	800	800	800	0	0
INFORMATION	700	700	700	0	0
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	2,850	2,850	2,650	0	200
PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES	1,900	1,900	1,850	0	50
EDUCATIONAL & HEALTH SERVICES	5,450	5,500	5,200	-50	250
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,750	3,800	3,600	-50	150
LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY	3,400	3,350	3,450	50	-50
Accommodation and Food Services	2,650	2,650	3,050	0	-400
OTHER SERVICES	1,400	1,400	1,400	0	0
GOVERNMENT	8,700	8,550	8,450	150	250
Federal Government	350	350	350	0	0
State Government Education	300	250	300	50	0
Local Government Education	2,900	2,800	2,700	100	200
Other State Government	4,500	4,500	4,500	0	0
Other Local Government	650	650	600	0	50

Unemployment Insurance Program Summary

	February 2003	January 2003	February 2002	Percent Change From Last Month Last Year	
UI Trust Fund	\$267,153,805	\$276,277,387	\$291,965,095	-3.3%	-8.5%
UI Reg. Benefit Payments *	\$11,057,413	\$11,690,369	\$9,138,143	-5.4%	21.0%
UI Initial Claims	4,321	4,312	3,905	0.2%	10.7%
UI Weeks Claimed	47,842	48,666	42,087	-1.7%	13.7%

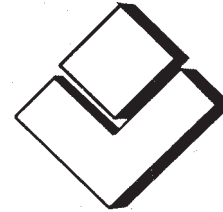
**Includes benefit payments for reimbursable employers.*

Average Hours and Earnings of Production and Nonsupervisory Workers

INDUSTRY BY NAICS	Average Weekly Earnings(\$)			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings(\$)		
	Feb. '03 Prelim.	Jan. '03 Revised	Feb. '02 Revised	Feb. '03 Prelim.	Jan. '02 Revised	Feb. '02 Revised	Feb. '03 Prelim.	Jan. '03 Revised	Feb. '02 Revised
GOODS PRODUCING	579.47	580.26	577.90	39.5	39.5	39.8	14.67	14.69	14.52
Natural Resources & Mining	427.67	431.12	417.46	31.4	31.7	31.2	13.62	13.60	13.38
Construction	596.73	594.80	605.14	38.9	38.8	39.5	15.34	15.33	15.32
Manufacturing	577.75	577.10	573.43	39.9	39.8	40.1	14.48	14.50	14.30
Durable Goods	600.07	599.09	596.01	40.3	40.1	40.6	14.89	14.94	14.68
Non-Durable Goods	514.26	516.12	504.65	38.9	39.1	38.7	13.22	13.20	13.04
SERVICE PROVIDING									
Wholesale Trade	621.13	618.99	623.70	34.7	34.6	35.0	17.90	17.89	17.82
Retail Trade	359.33	358.75	343.10	30.4	30.3	29.4	11.82	11.84	11.67
Health Care & Social Assist.	539.70	528.57	539.34	29.9	29.3	30.3	18.05	18.04	17.80
BURLINGTON AREA									
Manufacturing	571.16	567.75	568.10	37.7	37.5	38.0	15.15	15.14	14.95

Vermont Department of

Labor & Industry



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Commissioner's Message

Workplace safety and workers' compensation are two issues that go hand in hand. In a perfect world - in which all workplaces are free from work-related accidents - there is no need for workers' comp insurance.

Sadly, this is not a perfect world. Workplace accidents do happen, and employees do get injured. Workplace injuries can have a negative impact on the cost of workers' comp insurance for businesses. Logically, those businesses with the highest rates of workplace injuries often pay the most for their workers' comp coverage.

The Department of Labor and Industry encourages businesses to do everything they can to create, maintain and promote a safe and healthy workplace for employees. One way to do so is by contacting Project WorkSAFE, a Division of Labor and Industry which offers on-site or off-site workplace safety consultations. Project WorkSAFE is a voluntary program that will work with you to identify and correct any hazards in the workplace, and any hazards that are identified are exempt from penalties as long as the hazard is corrected in a timely manner. Project WorkSAFE's free and confidential services have been used by hundreds of Vermont businesses over the past few years. You can read more about Project WorkSAFE in this edition of the Vermont Labor Market. If you would like to sign up for a consultative visit, or learn more about the Project WorkSAFE, please contact the program directly at 888-SAFE-YES or on the web at www.state.vt.us/labind.

Workplace safety is not, however, the sole domain of government. Here in Vermont, we are fortunate to have industry groups who have put workplace safety and worker development at the top of their agenda. Associated General Contractors of Vermont (AGC) is a perfect example. AGC recently opened the Northeast Regional Safety Academy (NERSA) just outside of Montpelier. It is the first hands-on construction training facility in Vermont. Besides safety training for private industry, NERSA is also an excellent training facility for municipal workers, local fire departments and EMTs.

Every employer has an obligation to make their workplace as safe and healthy as possible for their employees. If you are a business owner or manager, try to be proactive - not reactive - about workplace safety. Remember, a safe and healthy workforce is a happy and productive workforce.

Project WorkSAFE

Project WorkSAFE is a free, confidential, occupational safety and health consultation program providing business assistance to small Vermont businesses. (Less than 250 employees per site, 500 corporate.) WorkSAFE seeks to work with Vermont employers to develop and or maintain safe and healthy conditions in the workplace. Based on a company's request, these services are provided with a variety of options. This may include help over the phone or a site visit to help conduct training and or perform a site hazard assessment.

WorkSAFE seeks to work with Vermont employers to develop and or maintain safe and healthy conditions in the workplace.

Our consultants can help you with safety audits covering topics such as electrical, machine point of operation and power transmission apparatus guarding, lock out tag out, fall protection and

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(continued from page 10)

confined spaces. The health audits cover topics as blood borne pathogens, chemical evaluations including air monitoring, ergonomics, noise monitoring, non-ionizing radiation evaluations, and other health related hazards. All the consultants on staff can provide help in developing safety and health programs. Consultants provide clear interpretation of Vermont OSHA and Federal OSHA regulations and help identify violations of these acts and other potential hazards. Consultants then provide helpful information on how to correct these violations. Companies who use this service must agree to fix serious safety and health hazards identified by consultation staff.



Over the past year significant changes have taken place with the program. Occupational health staff was moved from the Department of Health to the Department of Labor and Industry. A new director was named to administer the program. The new director is a working manager who continues to provide occupational health services to program participants. All staff have been given ownership of the program to encourage efficiency of resources. The program was also removed from the Vermont OSHA program to be a separate stand-alone program. A new web page was developed as well as a new toll free phone number. The webpage allows anyone to ask confidential occupational safety and health questions by e-mail. You can register for a list serve

that will notify you of upcoming safety and health trainings. A new safety consultant has been trained to start providing occupational health assistance to public sector participants while still providing safety consultations to private sector employers.

Current staff have a variety of backgrounds in environmental health, occupational health, fire prevention, electrical, chemical, safety management, construction, utility as well as other related fields. Combined staff have over 50 years of experience and work with over a hundred businesses on a yearly basis. If we cannot help you solve your unique problems we can assist you in obtaining other resources that will address your concerns.

Partnerships have been developed with a variety of interested parties and Vermont employers. Examples include, a partnership with the nursing home industry, and a very successful partnership in safety, offering a free training seminar, with Green Mountain Coffee Roasters and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). We have also developed a partnership in safety for construction with Paul Berkner MD, and the McKernon Group; offering free quarterly trainings on a variety of safety and health issues. This partnership also works with the Small Business Development Center for support. Future goals are, to form a partnership with Hackett, Valine & McDonald and the Vermont Ski Area Association to provide training and program assistance to all the stakeholders.

We will be working to have two interns join our program during the

summer months. One intern will have a physical therapy background and will be helping to provide employer assistance and developing training tools to prevent ergonomic injuries and illnesses. The second intern will be working with the safety consultants to provide assistance in reducing safety hazards and developing training documents.

We continue to work on certifying and finding new companies with outstanding safety and health programs to be involved in the Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP). This program recognizes outstanding companies for their hard work and commitment. See our web page for more information.

Section staff will be increasing their involvement in safety and health seminars around the state. This will keep the consultants informed of Vermont Business needs and concerns regarding safety and health issues and the costs of workers compensation rates. We are excited to have been part of the very successful Vermont Safety and Health Conference this past February that was held Burlington. We hope to continue this type of involvement in future conferences. Vermont companies are encouraged to work with this program and provide feedback and input to the program. The benefit of this collaboration is that it will assist Project WorkSAFE in gathering information that will be utilized to improve overall professional health and safety services provided.



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The Edge - (continued from page 2)

The Department recommended a bill that would extend the rate reduction through the quarter ending in June, the last quarter of the current rate year. This will prevent an automatic tax increase for one quarter and allow employers and payroll services to avoid changing automated systems. The impact on the UI Trust fund is minimal, since most of the unemployment taxes are collected on the basis of wages paid during the calendar quarter of January through March, when all employers are paying taxes on the first \$8000 of wages. The House Commerce Committee has also amended the proposal to extend the \$18 a week additional benefit through June 30, 2003.

At this writing, the outcome of the proposal is unknown. If there is no extension of the rate reduction through the 4th quarter of the current rate year, DET will be notifying employers of the rate change in early May. Since the rate change will be the result of a shift from Tax Schedule I to Schedule II, it does not include a recalculation of employer's experience ratings. The rate change will also be reflected on the Quarterly Wage and Contribution report that will be mailed in late June.

The annual recalculation of experience rating and assignment of rates for the rate year July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004, will occur as scheduled.

Go to our web site at <http://www.det.state.vt.us/detui/status.htm#er4> to see the UI tax table with the current and future tax rates. Go to our web site at <http://www.det.state.vt.us/detui/leg.htm> to view the sections of Act 143 pertaining to the UI program.