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Commissioner's Message

Patricia A. McDonald, VDOL Commissioner

Legislative News 2006

Every year the legislature considers proposals to make changes in programs. This year there are a number of proposals important to individuals and businesses that are related to programs and activities administered by VDOL. This month I would like to summarize those proposals. You can find the bills and follow their progress on the legislature's website (<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/>).

House bill H.702 sets fees that state agencies may charge for services not supported by other funding. Section 7 of the bill sets the workers' compensation fee. VDOL requested that this fee remain the same, which is 0.4% of direct calendar year premium. The House of Representatives agreed to that request and the Senate Finance Committee is now considering the bill.

H.576 makes changes to law necessitated by Governor Douglas' creation of the Department of Labor last year. H.735 makes similar changes but also provides for some refinement in some issues under department authority including: the authority to subpoena records related to wage disputes and limited liability companies' (L.L.Cs) ability to exclude members or managers from workers' compensation coverage.

There are two additional bills (S.297 and H.697) proposing to allow limited liability companies to exempt officers and members from workers' compensation coverage.

The House (H.590) and Senate (S.251) are considering bills that create the presumption that a volunteer fire fighter who has a heart attack, was injured on the job and qualifies for workers' compensation. Last year a similar change affecting only full time firefighters was enacted into law.

Senate bill S.245 changes minimum wage provisions of tipped employees. Current law requires tipped employees, like other workers, earn at least the minimum wage, \$7.25 per hour. Currently employers must pay these workers a base pay of \$3.65 per hour even if they earn more than \$3.60 per hour in tips. S.245 would increase the base pay by the rate of inflation, the same rate as the minimum wage.

H.571 proposes to make a number of changes in the workers' compensation law. Among other things, the bill provides the following: places a limit on annual benefit increases beyond the worker's average wage, gives greater weight to doctor's statements without consideration of other medical or relevant information, and provides for a higher standard of proof for a psychological injury when claimed as a result of a physical injury.

H.109 is primarily focused upon reauthorizing the Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC). The HRIC has a number of responsibilities

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The Edge

Business Awards: Green Mountain VPP Off to a Great Start

With the recognition of its second job site, the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (VOSHA) VPP Programs, known as the Green Mountain Voluntary Protection Programs, (GMVPP) is off to a great start.

In June, **Entergy Nuclear Northeast Vermont Yankee**, located in Vernon, received the honor of becoming Vermont's first VPP site. It received the GMVPP Merit site recognition. Entergy is Vermont's only nuclear power plant, with approximately 400 employees and 146 contract personnel.

Earth Tech, a wastewater treatment facility in St. Johnsbury, became Vermont's first GMVPP Star site. With 5 full time site employees, it represents the other end of the size spectrum. Indeed, Earth Tech, which is a division of the Tyco Corporation, approached the VPP process from the standpoint of a small worksite. Earth Tech put a lot of time and energy into achieving the Star recognition. Not only was the effort a resounding success, but it was absolute proof that the VPP process is achievable by smaller employer work sites. In fact, we learned that there are unique advantages that a small employer site enjoys in the VPP process.

The success stories of these

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in workforce development policy.

The legislature is considering legislation designed to reduce identity theft. S.284 and H.792 limit the use of social security numbers and create a process for dealing responding to a breach of security.

S.298 makes the employer responsible for any check cashing fee its bank charges for cashing payroll checks.

H.839 proposes to require that employers provide employees with paid sick leave. The bill mandates the provision of 7 days paid sick leave annually for employees who work 30 hours/week or more and pro-rated leave for those who work fewer than 30 hours/ week.

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two sites are very exciting and the employees and management of both companies should be congratulated. Their hard work and dedication to safety has paid off and they will be able to share their expertise with other prospective GMVPP applicants.

Most recently, VOSHA has completed a comprehensive onsite survey of the General Electric Facilities in Rutland. This company employs over 1200 people in three separate locations. At the end of the weeklong onsite review, the VPP team made up of VT. VOSHA staff and 2 federal OSHA staff from Boston recommended that GE be

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awarded the Green Mountain VPP Star designation. GE provided the largest and most comprehensive onsite survey to date. GE is to be commended for the hard work and dedication to safety and health by all employees and managers at the site.

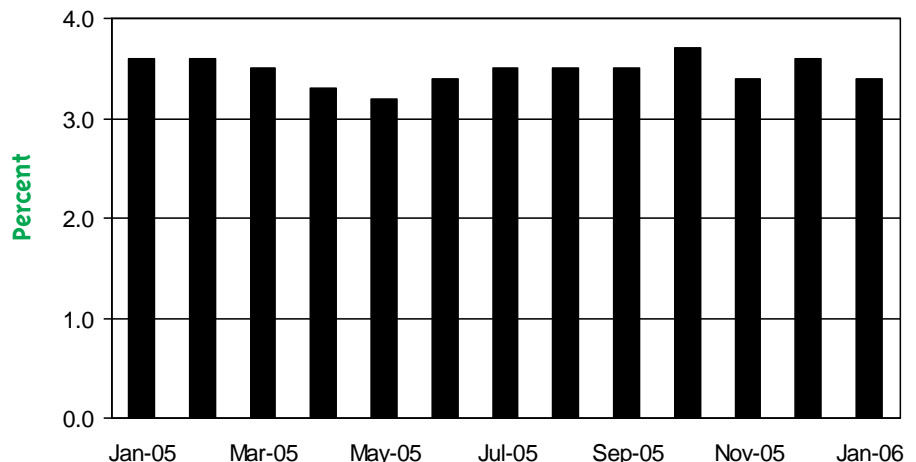
“The GMVPP concept recognizes that good safety management programs, those that go beyond mere compliance with VOSHA standards, can protect workers and reduce work injuries and illnesses more effectively,” says Patricia McDonald, Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Labor. “Promoting and maintaining the criteria established by the GMVPP fosters a cooperative working relationship between management, labor and VOSHA, and supports safety and health as an operational core value.”

On another front, the GMVPP is proud to announce a worksite actively engaged in the OSHA Challenge Program. Gregory Supply is a building materials retailer, with two sites located in Chittenden County Vermont. Curtis Lumber, a Region Two VPP site from Ballston Spa, New York, is currently mentoring both sites. We are excited to continue moving forward with Gregory Supply in this process.

The GMVPP program is closely modeled after the program offered through the Boston Regional OSHA office. “It was important that when we were adopting VPP, that we try to closely follow the procedures already in place in Region One,” said GMVPP Coordinator Dan Whipple. “The reason for this is twofold. First, having a model to follow helps lessen the steep angle of the learning curve. Second, employers working with us may have job sites throughout Region One, so following Region One procedures promotes consistency.”

While Vermont did use the Region One VPP program as a model, the GMVPP does differ from Region One OSHA in one key area. The GMVPP offers a separate program tailored for the construction industry, which is unique to Vermont. It utilizes a similar application and closely follows the same guidelines as the general industry version, but incorporates specific procedures that recognize rapidly changing conditions in a typical construction site. Currently there are a number of construction firms having expressed interest in the GMVPP Construction Program and we expect further activity in this area.

Vermont Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate



Vermont Unemployment Estimates Statewide *(Seasonally Adjusted)*

	Jan. '06	Dec. '05	Jan. '05	Changes from:	
				Dec. '05	Jan. '05
TOTAL LABOR FORCE¹	360,900	359,300	354,100	1,600	6,800
EMPLOYED	348,700	346,500	341,300	2,200	7,400
UNEMPLOYED	12,200	12,900	12,800	-700	-600
RATE (%)	3.4	3.6	3.6	-0.2	-0.2

¹Includes proprietors, professionals, and unpaid family workers.

Labor Market Areas By Residence *(Not Seasonally Adjusted)*

AREA	Total Labor Force	Number Employed	Number Unemployed	Jan-06 Rate (%)	Dec-05 Rate (%)	Jan-04 Rate (%)
Barre-Montpelier	29,200	27,550	1,600	5.6	3.7	6.1
Bennington	12,650	12,100	500	4.1	3.4	4.7
Bradford	5,100	4,800	300	5.5	3.6	6.2
Brattleboro	24,900	24,050	850	3.5	3.1	3.8
Burlington-South Burlington	111,450	107,350	4,100	3.7	3.1	3.7
Hartford	18,800	18,400	400	2.0	1.7	2.4
Manchester	12,950	12,500	450	3.6	3.5	3.9
Middlebury	17,600	16,850	750	4.2	3.3	4.4
Morristown-Stowe	20,800	19,850	950	4.6	3.8	5.3
Newport	14,300	13,400	900	6.4	5.4	7.1
Randolph	8,200	7,850	350	4.3	3.3	4.5
Rutland	29,600	28,500	1,150	3.8	3.2	3.9
Springfield	13,100	12,600	500	4.0	4.0	4.0
St. Johnsbury	14,550	13,850	750	5.0	3.6	5.4
Swanton-Enosburg	14,250	13,300	900	6.4	5.5	6.2
Warren-Waitsfield	4,900	4,800	100	2.2	2.3	2.1
Woodstock	3,550	3,450	100	2.5	1.9	3.1
Vermont Total	358,150	343,350	14,800	4.1	3.4	4.4

AREAS FROM ADJOINING STATES INCLUDING VERMONT TOWNS (Not Seasonally Adjusted)

Colebrook, NH-VT	3,750	3,650	150	3.8	5.1	3.6
Lebanon, NH-VT	44,750	43,750	1,050	2.3	2.1	2.4
Littleton, NH-VT	15,150	14,600	550	3.6	3.2	3.7
North Adams, MA-VT	16,700	15,600	1,100	6.5	5.3	6.4

Monthly estimates are preliminary and subject to revision. Detail may not add to totals due to rounding.

Vermont Seasonally Adjusted Nonfarm Employment in Thousands

BY NAICS	Prelim.	Revised	Revised	Changes From:	
	Jan. '06	Dec. '05	Jan. '05	Dec. '05	Jan. '05
Total - All Industries	306.7	306.6	304.5	0.1	2.2
Private Industries	253.3	253.6	251.7	-0.3	1.6
Construction	16.5	16.8	16.4	-0.3	0.1
Manufacturing	36.8	36.8	37.0	0.0	-0.2
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	59.9	59.7	59.4	0.2	0.5
Retail Trade *	40.7	40.7	40.5	0.0	0.2
Financial Activities	13.2	13.3	13.2	-0.1	0.0
Professional & Business Services	22.2	22.0	21.7	0.2	0.5
Education & Health Care	54.8	54.6	53.7	0.2	1.1
Private Ed. Services*	12.4	12.4	12.5	0.0	-0.1
Health Care & Social Assistance*	42.4	42.4	41.2	0.0	1.2
Leisure & Hospitality	32.9	32.9	33.1	0.0	-0.2
Other Services	10.1	9.9	10.0	0.2	0.1
Total Government	53.4	53.0	52.8	0.4	0.6

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

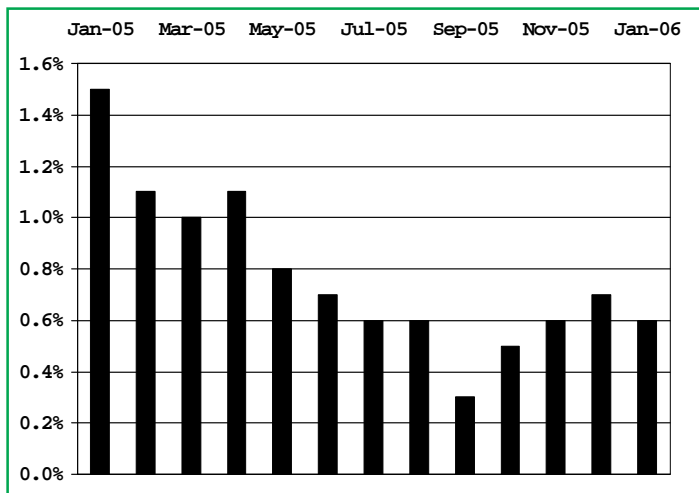
Note: Total - All Industries estimate is seasonally adjusted independently.

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

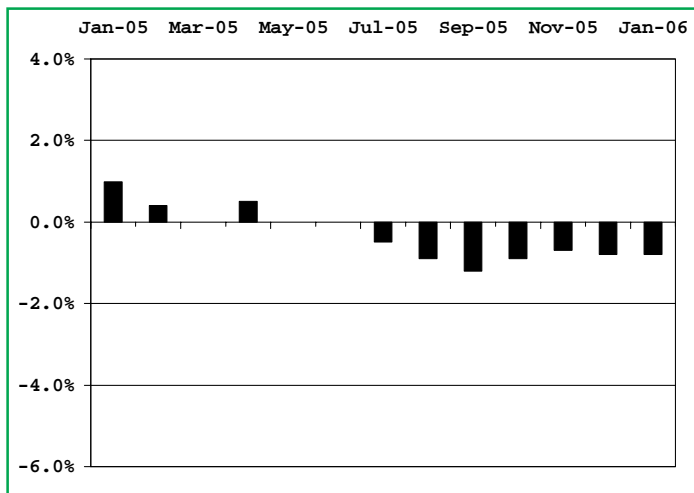
Produced by the Vermont Department of Labor in cooperation with the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, unless otherwise noted.

Vermont Annual Job Growth Not Seasonally Adjusted Data

All Industries



Manufacturing



Nonfarm Employment In Vermont *(Not Seasonally Adjusted)*

Compiled by the Vermont Department of Labor in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

INDUSTRY BY NAICS	Prelim. Jan. '06	Revised Dec. '05	Revised Jan. '05	Changes From:	
				Dec. '05	Jan. '05
TOTAL NONFARM	304,950	312,100	303,200	-7,150	1,750
TOTAL PRIVATE	251,100	256,300	249,650	-5,200	1,450
GOODS PRODUCING	51,600	54,450	51,700	-2,850	-100
MANUFACTURING	36,250	37,100	36,550	-850	-300
Durable Goods	26,150	26,750	26,250	-600	-100
Computer & Electrical Equipment Mfg.	9,300	9,250	9,250	50	50
Fabricated Metal Products Mfg.	3,050	3,000	2,950	50	100
Machinery Mfg.	3,000	2,950	3,000	50	0
Transportation Equipment Mfg.	2,450	2,450	2,450	0	0
Furniture & Related Product Mfg.	2,150	2,050	2,100	100	50
Non-Durable Goods	10,100	10,350	10,300	-250	-200
Food Mfg.	3,750	3,900	3,700	-150	50
CONSTRUCTION	14,600	16,450	14,400	-1,850	200
NATURAL RESOURCES & MINING	750	900	750	-150	0
SERVICE-PROVIDING	253,350	257,650	251,500	-4,300	1,850
TRADE, TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES	59,250	61,700	59,050	-2,450	200
Wholesale Trade	10,000	10,100	9,950	-100	50
Retail Trade	40,300	42,600	40,100	-2,300	200
Food & Beverage Stores	9,500	9,750	9,450	-250	50
General Merchandise Store	2,800	3,100	2,900	-300	-100
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities	8,950	9,000	9,000	-50	-50
Utilities	1,700	1,700	1,700	0	0
Transportation & Warehousing	7,250	7,300	7,300	-50	-50
INFORMATION	6,250	6,300	6,250	-50	0
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	13,050	13,350	13,100	-300	-50
Finance & Insurance	9,900	10,050	9,900	-150	0
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	3,150	3,300	3,200	-150	-50
PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES	21,250	22,050	20,850	-800	400
Professional, Scientific and Technical	12,750	13,000	12,600	-250	150
Administrative, Support and Waste	8,150	8,750	7,950	-600	200
EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH SERVICES	54,500	55,350	53,300	-850	1,200
Educational Services	12,150	12,850	12,200	-700	-50
College, Universities and Professional	6,600	6,950	6,650	-350	-50
Health Care and Social Assistance	42,350	42,500	41,100	-150	1,250
Ambulatory Health Care Services	15,650	15,650	15,750	0	-100
Hospitals	10,900	10,900	10,400	0	500
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	6,850	6,800	6,600	50	250
LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY	35,400	33,150	35,550	2,250	-150
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	3,250	3,050	3,300	200	-50
Accommodation and Food Services	32,150	30,100	32,250	2,050	-100
Accommodations	14,150	12,050	14,350	2,100	-200
Hotel & Motels	13,300	11,250	13,400	2,050	-100
Food Services and Drinking Places	18,000	18,050	17,900	-50	100
OTHER SERVICES	9,800	9,950	9,850	-150	-50
GOVERNMENT	53,850	55,800	53,550	-1,950	300
Federal Government	6,000	6,050	6,100	-50	-100
State Government Education	7,400	9,150	7,450	-1,750	-50
Local Government Education	24,100	24,250	23,850	-150	250
Other State Government	9,450	9,150	9,400	300	50
Other Local Government	6,900	7,200	6,750	-300	150



Challenges of Re-entry

In the best of times, making a transition can be difficult if not downright challenging. Consider how complex it might be for any incarcerated individual to transition back into non-incarcerated, or civilian, life. In “government speak,” we call this process “re-entry.”

Over the past couple of years, the Vermont Department of Labor in partnership with the Department of Corrections, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Community High School of Vermont has been helping develop co-case management protocols to facilitate the re-entry process. These protocols identify the specific times these partners can make the most difference in an incarcerated person’s re-entry, and the types of activities and services that will be necessary to make this transition successful.

Obtaining occupational skills and a job can make a huge difference in a person’s successful re-entry. But having a job alone without other basic needs being met won’t make for a successful or sustained re-entry. Having secure housing, medical access, reliable transportation, and other types of supports such as substance abuse counseling in concert with either having a job or being in a job training program will make this difficult transition more likely to succeed.

In addition, access to a mentor can make a difference in any person’s life, but especially in the life of a formerly incarcerated individual. A mentoring program has been established by Sisters of Mercy and Northern New England Tradeswomen for incarcerated women re-entering. Early reports suggest that this mentor program makes a substantial difference in an individual’s successful transition.

Over the next several months, work will continue among the key stakeholders to perfect the case management protocols and access to services. This will be done, in part, through the development of Career Resource and Transition Service Centers within Vermont’s prison facilities. In many facilities, these will be connected with the Community High School of Vermont. External to the facilities, the growing Community Justice Centers provide the infrastructure to access needed services once an individual is released. In addition, efforts are underway to apply for federal

funds to facilitate the re-entry of incarcerated females, the fastest growing population in our correctional facilities.

Through comprehensive, individualized assessments with access to education and career exploration along with other necessary support services, incarcerated individuals will have a much greater likelihood of making a successful re-entry transition.

Computer Numerical Control Machinist (CNC) Training

The Vermont Department of Labor provides workforce training in many ways. Throughout the year, hundreds of eligible individuals receive occupational training under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and nearly a thousand participate in Registered Apprenticeship. In addition, a VDOL funding resource, the Workforce Education and Training Fund (WETF), has been the driving force behind large, focused training initiatives that impact workers and employers on a statewide scale.

One such initiative is the Computer Numerical Control Machinist (CNC) training that was developed and launched in 2005. The need for CNC training was first identified within the apprenticeship division at

VDOL, and initial informational meetings were held in December of 2004 with interested employers and potential training providers.

The meetings helped to confirm the scope of the need and define the specific training required. Most importantly, since VDOL itself doesn't deliver training, the meetings helped us identify a training provider capable of developing and delivering CNC training, as well as employers who were willing to hire trainees, and actively support and participate in developing the training.

VDOL had identified CNC machinist training as an effort that deserved state financial support, as long as a qualified trainer was able to develop a strong proposal for review by the state level WETF panel. The WETF provides financial support to training providers in partnership with Vermont employers, as long as certain conditions are met, including high level wages and firm commitments to hire successful trainees.

One training provider, Vermont HITEC, and several Chittenden County employers accepted the challenge, and a comprehensive CNC Training proposal was submitted and approved in March 2005. In the meantime, VDOL had secured the support of a partner in state government, the Department of Economic Development's

Vermont Training Program. By combining state resources with matching resources from participating employers, it was possible to develop training that would meet an immediate need in Chittenden County, while creating a "portable" CNC training model that could be delivered statewide on a long-term basis.

HITEC rented and equipped the classroom space, hired instructors, and together with employers developed an intensive 9-week curriculum. The objective of the training was to prepare students to enter a two-year apprenticeship with one of the sponsoring employers. The training was designed to combine hands-on instruction, including the fundamentals of traditional machining, with technical course work, so that graduates would have practical experience as well as the technical education.

All parties, HITEC, VDOL and the sponsoring employers, participated in the recruitment, assessment, and selection of trainees for the first class. Two employers, Hazelett Strip-Casting Corporation and Pre-Tech Precision Machining, were involved from the beginning, with a commitment to hire 10 trainees. As a result of employer interest and an impressive pool of training candidates, the effort was expanded to include five additional employers and six more trainees.

The first class began in late summer and graduated on November 30, after nine extremely intensive weeks of training. Thirteen of the original sixteen trainees successfully completed, and all are employed with the sponsoring employers as apprentice CNC machinists.

Employers were always welcome at the training site, and many had frequent interaction with the trainees throughout the session. They are extremely pleased with the level of knowledge and skill demonstrated by these new workers.

The second session of CNC training will be held in Springfield, beginning February 27. Recruitment began in January, with eight employer sponsors from the Springfield area. Again, a large pool of candidates applied, and final selection of sixteen trainees was announced on February 17. The same training curriculum and format will be followed, and successful trainees will begin their CNC apprenticeship immediately after graduation. The next session is planned for the Northeast Kingdom, with recruitment expected to begin in late spring.



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