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Annual Average Wage Grows to \$35,958 in 2008

The average West Virginia worker earned \$35,985 in 2008, according to statistics released by WorkForce West Virginia, a division of the West Virginia Department of Commerce. The average annual wage in the state rose by \$1,984, about 5.8 percent from 2007. Average annual employment grew to 709,575 from 708,313, an increase of 1,262. Only three major industries experienced employment growth over the year. These included educational and health services (+2,890), construction (+2,504), and leisure and hospitality (+1,097). The three industries with the highest declining employment were manufacturing (-2,664), trade, transportation, and utilities (-1,216), and government (-866).

A survey of wages shows federal government health services paid the highest average annual wage among the state's major industry sectors with an average of \$76,284, followed by utilities (\$72,779), mining (\$69,062), management services (\$64,300), and wholesale trade (\$48,058).

Boone County continued to report the highest average annual wage at \$49,665 followed by Mingo (\$44,723), Putnam (\$42,015), Marshall (\$41,966), Pleasants (\$40,831), Wayne (\$40,488), Wyoming (\$40,112), Kanawha (\$39,669), Grant (\$39,517), and Tyler (\$37,941). Tucker County had the lowest annual average wage of \$23,242, followed by Wirt (\$23,707), Wetzel, (\$25,386), Summers (\$25,542), and Pocahontas (\$26,376).

Fastest-growing counties in terms of the number of employed were Putnam (+1,312), Ohio (+978), McDowell (+431), Harrison (+412), and Boone (+403). West Virginia covered employers paid over \$25 billion in wages, an increase of just over \$1.4 billion or 6.0 percent from 2007.

Based on data that include all workers covered by state and federal unemployment insurance programs, these statistics appear each year in the West Virginia Employment and Wages. Also included are data on average annual employment, average annual and weekly wages, and the number of employers by detailed industry for the state and each of its 55 counties. West Virginia Employment and Wages can be found online at www.wvbep.org/bep/lmi/WAGEDATA.htm.