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# MONTANA LABOR MARKET

Monthly Review of  
EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK, LABOR SUPPLY, LABOR DEMAND, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

## MONTANA STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Division of Unemployment Compensation Commission of Montana

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FL-107

MARCH 15, 1952

### Less Than Usual Decline In February Employment

Total employment in Montana industries declined very slightly from January 15 to February 15, according to estimates compiled by the Commission in co-operation with the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. The decrease amounted to a mere 500 workers, which is 0.3 percent of the 143,200 workers reported in January. This total is exclusive of agricultural employment.

#### Favorable Weather a Factor

Favorable weather conditions during most of February permitted a mild resumption of some construction activities, and tempered the extent of decline in other outdoor work which usually characterizes the midwinter month. A year ago the February figure was 1,700 below that of its preceding month, but two years ago the difference was 1,000, and three years ago it was 1,600; this year it was but 300.

#### Construction Reflects 300 Gain

By industry groups the decline this year was 200 in wholesale and retail trade, 200 in service industries, 100 each in manufacturing, transportation and utilities, and government, partially offset by a fair-weather gain of 300 in contract construction. These shifts in number employed are seasonal in character and normally are followed by an upturn in total employment during March and through succeeding months. Logging operations are an exception in that they usually encounter spring layoffs on account of soft roads and melting snow, while coal mining comes to its seasonal slump as domestic fuel consumption dwindles with warmer weather.

#### Total 300 Below Year Ago

Comparison of February figures with those of February, 1951, reveals a lag of about 300 this year. This swing in industrial groups is indicative of cyclical, rather than seasonal, trends. Manufacturing of durable goods employed 1,000 fewer persons than a year ago, 500 of the loss being in lumber and timber, 200 in primary metals, and 300 in stone and clay products. Manufacture of non-durable goods, on the other hand, showed a gain of 200 over the year ago figure, 100 in food processing and 100 in printing and publishing.

#### Transportation and Trade Increase

Decline of 300 from a year ago is shown in the crucial field of metal mining, with coal mining and petroleum production holding steady. Contract construction is employing fewer workers this year than last, largely due to the curtailment of residence and commercial building activities. Net gain of 500 in transportation and utilities, 300 in wholesale and retail trade, 200 in finance, and 300 in government is disclosed.

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### SHRINKAGE IN NUMBER OF JOB APPLICANTS GIVES HINT OF SUMMER LABOR SHORTAGE

Labor supply in Montana at the close of February, as reflected in number of jobseekers at offices of the employment service, was nearly 20 percent less than a year ago, and 45 percent below that of 1950. There were 10,389 jobseekers this year, 12,336 in late February of 1951, and 18,852 in 1950. The number of women applicants included in those figures is 2,245 for 1952; 2,935 in 1951, and 3,665 in 1950.

#### Seasonal Unemployment Starts Annual Decline

Seasonal influences operate to swell the unemployment group to its maximum point during January and February each year. Approximately 80 percent of the present unemployment is attributable to seasonal industries and enterprises. The month of March normally turns the scales slowly back toward re-employment, a movement which is already apparent in Montana's labor markets. Staffing of seasonal labor demands is largely dependent upon the reserve labor pool represented by the present jobseekers.

#### Supply Less Than Recent Years

Shrinkage of that pool from its dimensions of a year ago, and still more so with respect to two years ago, presents the question of adequacy of labor supply currently in sight to meet the demands of the busy season ahead. During the summer seasons of the past two years the labor reserve became depleted almost to the vanishing point, especially during 1951, giving strength to the presumption that labor shortages in some occupations and for some industries will develop as mid-summer demand reaches deep into the barrel.

#### Potential Demand Looks Strong

Expected seasonal demand for skilled labor on construction of dams, essential buildings, highways, bridges, and facilities, coupled with the usual demand from railroad, lumber, forestry, commerce, and agricultural industries, is no less than it was during recent spring periods. A slight decrease may be expected in the demand for workers in construction of private residences, but this in turn is offset by an accelerated demand for similar skills on large scale housing projects made necessary by national production and protection plans.

#### Hard-Rock Miners Sought

Most acute of the labor demands in sight is for experienced hard-rock miners for the metal producing areas. Addition of 1,000 men in that industry is sought in the next 90 days. Employment of that many additional miners will call for corresponding increases in ore-processing operations, and in turn will throw new requirements upon all avenues of trade and commerce.

#### February Demand Above Normal

Labor demand in February resulted in 1,830 job placements, 200 more than in February a year ago but still the lowest total for any month in the year period. Most of these placements were made in wholesale and retail trade, agriculture, mining, contract construction, manufacturing, and service industries.

#### Hiring at Hungry Horse Dam Soon

Recall of 150 laborers, 50 carpenters, and 75 other workmen at mid-March is expected at Hungry Horse dam, on the Flathead river, swelling to about 1,000 the crew employed on that project. In April the process of re-employment is expected to require another 800. Adequate labor supply for these needs is in the region or on call for return to jobs they left when winter began. Present operations center about power house construction, electrical installations, grouting, and the attendant forces of the reclamation bureau.

The April increase in force will take up the pouring of cement, halted during winter because of adverse temperature conditions. Crews for resumption of clearing operations within the reservoir area, and for road construction about the rim of the reservoir, will be re-formed as weather conditions permit, probably in May.

#### Canyon Ferry Resumes in March

Moderate increases in working force were made at Canyon Ferry dam near Helena during February. At the close of the month about 165 men were employed, one-third of the expected peak force. Mess hall and transportation facilities are expected to be re-opened March 17, when hiring for the spring campaign will begin. Much of this hiring, as was true during February also, will be in the nature of call-backs.

Pouring of cement is the principal activity on the program for 1952, and temperatures below 20 degrees prohibit open cement work, hence the resumption of full-scale operations on the dam awaits a more moderate level of weather. Winter employment has been engaged in tunnel and shaft excavation, clearing of the reservoir site, and preparations for extending the dam base over the section previously occupied by river diversion flumes.

#### Increased Crews on Highways

Highway contractors had 335 men employed on state projects in February, 100 more than the preceding month and 200 more than in February of 1951. Maintenance work on the state system of highways

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## Less Than Usual Decline In February Employment

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### Armament Program Has Effect

These changes in total employment from a year ago furnish a clue to economic reactions in the changing national pattern. Two specific decreases—in production of building materials and in construction of buildings—are an outcome of the increasing emphasis upon armament production and de-emphasis of all but essential commercial building operations in the nation and the state.

### Hourly Earnings Higher

Average hourly earnings in all industries reporting in January were higher than those of a year ago, and in all but two instances were equal to or greater than those prevailing for the previous month. Food processing and other non-durable goods manufacturing averaged higher hourly rates due to seasonal reductions of force from the lower wage brackets. Average number of hours worked per week ranged higher in metal mining, food processing, utilities and communications, resulting in slightly increased average weekly earnings.

## Along the Hiring Line ---

(Continued from Page 2)

**MALTA** — (116 jobseekers; 87 men, 29 women) Employment at low ebb, especially in construction and retail trade. Farm orders for workers being filed in advance. Hiring in March will use local supply.

**MILES CITY, Baker, Broadus, Ekalaka, Jordan, Terry** — (176 jobseekers; 137 men, 39 women; 25 men, 8 women, over 50) Job openings are at seasonal low, some trade hiring has begun. Paving, installation of water mains, building residences and commercial buildings all await favorable weather in March or April. Farm hiring earlier than normal.

**MISSOULA, Arlee, Drummond, Superior** — (1,106 jobseekers; 891 men, 215 women) Two logging camps are re-opening; retail trade is expanding sales forces; road project is using 80 men and expects to complete it before June. Road building preliminary to new match factory at Superior is employing a small crew. The enterprise will require 125 men when open weather permits it to get under way.

**POLSON** — (387 jobseekers; 335 men, 52 women) Preliminary work on additional unit at power plant begun. Supervisory and office force brought in from other stations. Labor and skills to be hired will open employment to qualified Indian applicants under agreement for jobs on Indian land.

**SHELBY, Chester, Conrad** — (189 jobseekers; 152 men, 37 women) No employment in construction during February. Building in several cities in the area, roads and bridges, and street improvement will be resuming in late March or early April. Present supply adequate at start, but not for whole season. Shortage of farm help is suggested in early hiring by farmers.

**SIDNEY** — (364 jobseekers; 343 men, 21 women) Clerical help in demand, all other occupational categories in surplus. Road and building construction will resume in early April, demand expected to develop late in March. Beet farm needs will require importation.

## ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT IN NON-AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN MONTANA (1)

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)

INDUSTRY	EMPLOYMENT			Net Change	
	Feb. 1952 (2)	Jan. 1952 (3)	Feb. 1951	Jan. 52 to Feb. 52	Feb. 51 to Feb. 52
<b>NONAGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES</b>	142,700	143,200	143,000	-500	-300
<b>Manufacturing</b>	16,500	16,600	17,300	-100	-800
Durable goods	9,500	9,700	10,500	200	1,000
Lumber and timber products	5,200	5,200	5,700	0	500
Primary metals	3,600	3,700	3,800	100	-200
Other (4)	700	800	1,000	100	300
Nondurable goods	7,000	6,900	6,800	100	200
Food and kindred products	3,900	3,900	3,800	0	100
Printing and publishing	1,600	1,700	1,500	100	100
Other (5)	1,500	1,500	1,500	0	0
<b>Mining</b>	10,900	11,000	11,200	-100	-300
Metal mining	8,500	8,600	8,800	100	-300
Bituminous and soft coal mining	800	800	800	0	0
Petroleum-natural gas production	1,100	1,100	1,100	0	0
Quarrying and nonmetallic mining	500	500	500	0	0
<b>Contract construction</b>	7,000	6,700	7,400	300	-400
Contractors, building construction	2,500	2,400	3,000	100	-500
Contractors, other than building	1,800	1,600	1,700	200	100
Contractors, special trade	2,700	2,700	2,700	0	0
<b>Transportation and utilities</b>	22,200	22,300	21,700	-100	500
Interstate railroads	13,800	13,800	13,700	0	100
Transportation except railroads	3,200	3,200	3,100	0	100
Utilities including communication	5,200	5,300	4,900	100	300
<b>Trade</b>	35,700	35,900	35,400	-200	300
Wholesale trade	7,800	7,900	7,600	-100	200
Retail trade	27,900	28,000	27,800	-100	100
General merchandise and apparel	5,800	5,900	5,700	100	100
Food stores	4,100	4,100	3,900	0	200
Eating and drinking establishments	7,500	7,400	7,200	100	300
Automotive and filling stations	4,900	5,000	4,800	-100	100
Retail trade not elsewhere classified	5,600	5,600	6,200	0	-600
<b>Finance, insurance and real estate</b>	4,200	4,200	4,000	0	200
<b>Services and miscellaneous</b>	18,500	18,700	18,600	-200	-100
Hotels, rooming houses, camps, etc.	2,700	2,700	2,400	0	300
Personal services	2,400	2,400	2,400	0	0
Other (6)	13,400	13,600	13,800	-200	400
<b>Government</b>	27,700	27,800	27,400	-100	300
<b>Great Falls Area (Cascade County)</b>	13,700	13,700	13,700	0	0
<b>Selected Industries</b>					
Manufacturing	2,700	2,800	2,800	-100	-100
Transportation and utilities	2,400	2,400	2,300	0	100
Trade	5,500	5,500	5,500	0	0
Services and miscellaneous (7)	3,100	3,000	3,100	100	0

- (1) Estimates include all full and part-time wage and salary workers who worked or received pay during the pay period ending nearest the 15th of the month. Proprietors, firm members, personnel of the armed forces, domestic servants, and self-employed persons are excluded.
- (2) Preliminary estimates based on return from sample of 563 selected Montana establishments.
- (3) Figures previously released have been revised on returns from 915 such establishments.
- (4) Includes fabricated metal products, machinery except electrical, furniture, stone and clay products.
- (5) Includes apparel, chemicals, petroleum, and miscellaneous manufacturing products.
- (6) Includes commercial trade schools, auto repair services and garages, miscellaneous repair services and hand trades, motion pictures, amusements and recreation, medical and health, law offices and professional services, nonprofit membership organizations and business not otherwise classified.
- (7) Same as (6) above, also includes finance, insurance, real estate and mining.

**THOMPSON FALLS, Hot Springs**—(224 jobseekers; 190 men, 34 women) Lumber employment declined in late February, due to closing one mill for 30 days for repairs, idling 65, and shutdown of a 22-man logging outfit because of inaccessibility of timber during late winter and early spring. Construction operations to resume in March and April. Supply adequate.

**WOLF POINT, Plentywood, Scobey** — (131 jobseekers; 106 men, 25 women) Construction of commercial buildings, homes, roads, bridges, and an electric line to be begun as soon as weather permits, probably April. Retail trade and service are at low employment ebb, will strengthen their forces as summer approaches. A shortage of clerks and restaurant help is anticipated.

COMPARISON OF BASIC LABOR MARKET TRANSACTIONS IN FEBRUARY 1952 AND FEBRUARY 1951

Employment Service Office	New Job Applicants				Jobseekers in File				Job Placements				Employer Visits		Job Openings		U. I. Claims Week 3-8	
	Feb. 1952		Feb. 1951		Feb. 1952		Feb. 1951		Feb. 1952		Feb. 1951		1952	1951	1952	1951	1952	1951
	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.						
Anaconda..	86	16	82	20	125	22	163	32	51	5	18	5	41	20	48	46	96	111
Billings.....	340	106	349	96	815	236	1,685	428	210	61	187	44	166	163	255	222	653	885
Bozeman.....	112	47	192	68	231	85	275	71	154	62	149	68	120	110	164	157	168	183
Butte.....	162	11	180	20	526	35	582	58	217	42	256	88	217	108	344	365	428	461
Cut Bank.....	54	10	53	18	223	47	231	55	18	5	18	7	42	40	21	24	199	199
Dillon.....	55	15	61	21	84	25	95	25	30	12	42	5	53	22	23	15	48	50
Forsyth.....	39	13	49	11	59	14	87	19	20	6	18	7	28	38	18	16	45	54
Fort Benton..	19	5	21	8	34	7	34	7	17	7	18	9	42	38	10	17	23	35
Glasgow.....	79	24	112	32	229	68	403	107	61	28	47	12	78	40	57	56	102	163
Glendive.....	96	26	52	17	36	6	136	42	65	30	19	2	45	51	65	23	41	82
Great Falls..	296	91	296	92	1,115	326	1,312	314	127	37	123	34	160	123	169	144	886	894
Hamilton.....	41	11	39	4	388	107	589	158	30	6	28	7	49	62	18	28	183	261
Havre.....	109	24	124	30	294	91	411	135	37	16	50	19	129	78	23	54	152	221
Helena.....	298	170	223	70	534	190	592	180	192	81	153	54	89	159	221	219	366	385
Kalispell.....	192	48	277	63	1,809	554	1,934	555	64	20	70	23	59	117	100	134	1,354	1,657
Lewistown.....	137	31	65	17	286	58	291	82	44	15	23	9	86	89	45	30	188	174
Libby.....	29	11	28	5	181	49	180	41	6	5	6	4	2	21	4	9	127	142
Livingston.....	148	23	214	58	474	92	349	81	87	20	98	41	85	56	71	86	185	146
Malta.....	23	4	39	6	116	30	165	34	23	9	30	11	65	42	30	30	91	106
Miles City.....	102	34	85	34	176	51	284	98	82	28	49	17	66	59	66	48	107	211
Missoula.....	156	49	201	60	1,106	268	1,082	300	123	25	87	20	74	112	129	75	614	702
Polson.....	89	11	41	2	387	117	385	85	21	7	7	0	29	21	29	11	292	308
Shelby.....	63	22	65	20	189	54	214	65	38	8	49	13	89	67	43	68	99	109
Sidney.....	73	17	60	14	364	78	397	99	54	10	53	11	52	93	52	34	172	244
Thomp. Falls..	35	7	38	12	224	31	263	57	16	7	25	11	28	16	20	26	194	201
Wolf Point....	48	14	41	8	131	35	197	59	37	11	15	4	48	24	35	17	126	152
*Tchr. Plcmt..	.....	.....	36	15	253	136	132	60	6	3	5	3	6	7	97	42	.....	.....
TOTALS.....	2,881	840	2,987	806	10,389	2,812	12,336	3,187	1,830	566	1,638	525	1,948	1,769	2,157	1,954	6,939	8,136

\*Not included in totals in 1951.

AVERAGE HOURS AND EARNINGS IN SELECTED MONTANA INDUSTRIES

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)  
(Hours and earnings data exclude administrative and salaried personnel)

INDUSTRY	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	Jan. 1952	Dec. 1951	Jan. 1951	Jan. 1952	Dec. 1951	Jan. 1951	Jan. 1952	Dec. 1951	Jan. 1951
All Manufacturing .....	\$78.55	\$77.84	\$72.72	42.9	43.4	42.8	\$1.83	\$1.79	\$1.70
Durable goods .....	81.50	83.13	78.44	43.9	44.5	45.2	1.86	1.87	1.74
Primary metals .....	82.68	83.19	73.86	44.8	45.6	44.2	1.84	1.82	1.67
Nondurable goods .....	73.48	70.97	64.49	41.2	41.3	39.4	1.78	1.72	1.64
Food and kindred products .....	63.36	60.10	55.96	42.0	40.9	40.7	1.51	1.47	1.38
All Mining .....	87.38	87.30	77.51	43.2	43.1	42.1	2.03	2.03	1.84
Metal mining .....	87.66	85.61	76.04	44.7	43.7	42.9	1.96	1.96	1.77
Transportation and Utilities (except railrds.) .....	70.32	68.42	64.03	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Transportation (except railrds.) .....	79.66	76.41	70.65	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Utilities and communication .....	63.40	62.50	58.67	40.5	39.1	39.0	1.57	1.60	1.51

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