

Weather Corner



National Weather Service

Tonight: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 34. East wind between 10 and 15 mph.

Saturday: A 30 percent chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 48. East wind around 15 mph.

Saturday Night: A 40 percent chance of snow, mainly before midnight. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 27. North wind between 10 and 15 mph.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 60. West wind 5 to 10 mph becoming south.

Sunday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 28.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 59.

Monday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 29.

Tuesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 45.

Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 18.

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 44.

Wednesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 18.

Thursday: Sunny, with a high near 47.

Thursday: High, 79; Low 20
Precip: Thursday 0.00 inches
Month: 0.00 inches
Year: 0.64 inches
Normal: 2.15 inches
(K-State Experiment Station)

Unemployment highest since 1983

By Jeannine Aversa
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — The nation's unemployment rate bolted to 8.1 percent in February, the highest since late 1983, as cost-cutting employers slashed 651,000 jobs amid a deepening recession.

Both figures were worse than analysts expected, and the Labor Department's report shows America's workers being clobbered by a wave of layoffs unlikely to ease in the coming months.

"There is no light at the end of the tunnel with these numbers," said Nigel Gault, economist at IHS Global Insight. "Job losses were everywhere and there's no hope for a turnaround any time soon."

February's net job loss came after even deeper payroll reductions in the prior two months, according to revised figures released today. The economy lost 681,000 jobs in December and another 655,000 in January.

Employers are shrinking their work forces and turning to other ways to slash costs — including trimming workers' hours, freezing wages or cutting pay — because the recession has eaten into their sales and profits. Customers at home and abroad are cutting back as other countries cope with their own economic problems.

Since the recession began in December 2007, the economy has lost 4.4 million jobs, more than half of which occurred in the past four months. President Barack Obama called that tally "astounding," but urged the American people to give him time to let his economic revival plans take root.

With employers showing no appetite to hire, the unemployment jumped half a percentage point from 7.6 percent in January. That was the highest since December 1983, when the jobless rate was 8.3 percent.

All told, the number of unemployed people climbed to 12.5 million. In addition, the number of people forced to work part time for "economic reasons" rose by a sharp 787,000 to 8.6 million. That's people who would like to work full time but whose hours were cut back or were unable to find full-time work.

If part-time, discouraged workers and others are factored in, the unemployment rate would have been 14.8 percent in February, the highest on records dating to 1994.

The pain hit blue- and white-collar workers, those without a high-school diploma and those highly educated. The jobless rate for people with a bachelor's degree or higher jumped to 4.1 percent last month from 3.8 percent in January. That's the highest on records dating to 1992.

Meanwhile, the average work week in February stayed at 33.3 hours, matching the record low set in December.

On Wall Street, stocks surrendered early gains as the severity of U.S. job losses began to register with investors. The Dow Jones

industrial average dipped about 15 points in afternoon trading and broader indexes also slipped.

Job losses were widespread last month.

Construction companies eliminated 104,000 jobs. Factories axed 168,000. Retailers cut nearly 40,000. Professional and business services got rid of 180,000, with 78,000 jobs lost at temporary-help agencies. Financial companies reduced payrolls by 44,000. Leisure and hospitality firms chopped 33,000 positions.

The few areas spared: education and health services, as well as government.

Disappearing jobs and evaporating wealth from tanking home values, 401(k)s and other investments have forced consumers to retrench, driving companies to lay off workers. It's a vicious cycle in which all the economy's negative problems feed on each other, worsening the downward spiral.

A new wave of layoffs hit this week.

The country is getting bloodied by fallout from the housing, credit and financial crises — the worst since the 1930s. And there's no easy fix for a quick turnaround, economists said.

Making future plans



DEBBIE SCHWANKE/Colby Community College
Lindsey Zellitti (right) took three prospective students on a tour of the Colby Community College campus during Junior Day Feb. 25. Fifty area students and their parents attended the event, designed to provide information about the college and its activities and programs. They were entertained by the Jazz Band, helped send the Trojan wrestlers off to the national tournament in Minnesota, met with advisors, ate lunch in the cafeteria and toured the campus.

Records to remain private unless charges filed

EL DORADO (AP) — A Kansas judge is blocking the release to the press of agency records for an 11-year-old boy who was missing for nearly a decade before anyone notified authorities.

Three media outlets, includ-

ing The Associated Press, filed an open-records request with the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The request was filed under a Kansas law that allows release of records when a child dies or nearly dies related to

abuse. Butler County District Judge Mike Ward ruled Friday that since no official determination has been made that Adam Herrman is dead, those records should remain private unless homicide charges are filed.

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Wind farm reaches milestone

MEDICINE LODGE (AP) — BP Wind Energy marks the start of full commercial operation of phase I at the Flat Ridge Wind Farm in southern Kansas.

State Treasurer Dennis McKinney joined local elected officials, landowners and community leaders Thursday to announce the milestone at the facility in Barber County, near Medicine Lodge.

Phase I generates 100 megawatts of electricity, enough energy to power about 30,000 average Kansas homes. Westar Energy and BP each own 50 megawatts of the energy generated by the wind farm. BP's share has been sold to Westar under a long-term power purchase agreement.

Westar is also investing in two other wind farms, one in Cloud County near Concordia, the other in Wichita County near Leoti. The utility will purchase power from the Cloud County site and own and operate the Wichita County site.

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