

# Oregon's unemployment rate jumps following decline

**Bill Poehler**  
Salem Statesman Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

After seven months of declines, Oregon's unemployment rate increased in the final month of 2020.

The state unemployment rate jumped to 6.4% in December, from 6.0% in November 2020, as the state lost 25,500 jobs. Most of the job loss was in the hospitality and leisure sector, which includes bars, restaurants and hotels.

Oregon's unemployment rate was still better than the national 6.7% in November and December.

The most recent freeze on businesses in Oregon due to the impacts of the CO-

VID-19 pandemic happened on Nov. 18, which caused some restaurants and bars to close again for in-person service or close altogether.

"While it's not the level of job loss that we saw in April 2020, 25,500 is a large loss over the month," State Employment Economist Gail Krumenauer said.

Employment in the leisure and hospitality sector declined by 28,600 jobs in December, which included 17,600 jobs in full-services restaurants, according to the Oregon Employment Department.

There were some sectors that picked up significant numbers of jobs in December, including couriers and messen-

gers (3,600); retail trade (2,200); transportation, warehousing and utilities (2,200); health care and social assistance (2,200); and professional and business services (2,100).

The state had 1,783,300 non-farm jobs in December, a decline of 174,000 jobs from December 2019.

Oregon's unemployment rate, which is calculated on the 12th of each month, went from an all-time low of 3.3% in February 2020 to 3.5% in March and skyrocketed to an all-time high of 14.9% in April.

But since April, the unemployment rate steadily declined as businesses reopened, dropping to 6.0% in November. The unemployment rate was slightly

higher for women for much of 2020, but that has equalized.

"That gap seems to have closed, but that's because men's unemployment rate has risen to 6.4%," Krumenauer said. "That's in line with women."

The state employment rate will likely continue to rise in January.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 12,663 initial claims for unemployment benefits in Oregon the week ending Jan. 9 and 12,810 initial claims the week prior.

*Bill Poehler covers Marion County for the Statesman Journal. Contact him at bpoehler@statesmanjournal.com or Twitter.com/bpoehler*

## Wildfire

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that with the largest trees gone, views of Three-Fingered Jack are remarkably clear for long stretches of trail, and you'll soon get some nice sights of Black Butte as well.

### Blowout Shelter offers glorious views

After 2.6 miles on the North Loop, you'll reach a junction and turn left to visit North Blowout Shelter, one of three delightful little huts in the backcountry where explorers can warm up by a fire, eat lunch and enjoy a knockout view of Three-Fingered Jack and Black Butte.

Originally built in the 1980s by the Willamette Chapter of the Oregon Nordic Club, the shelter was burned by the B&B Complex. However, it was quickly rebuilt in the same location.

The word blowout apparently comes from a nearby explosion of volcanic cinders, according to a story in the Nugget Newspaper of Sisters.

After lunch, I snapped back on my skis and headed out of the B&B burn zone and into the most challenging terrain that I've skied this year.

### North Loop into Twin Buttes offers hilly challenge

The next three miles were some of the most fun but also potentially hazardous sections of trail that I've skied this year.

The route dropped downhill on some roller-coaster run rises and falls on North Loop. At a junction, I keep straight onto Twin Buttes Trail instead of completing the North Loop, which is only 4 miles itself.

Twin Buttes gets into less traveled terrain but still has quite a few ups and downs. One hill was so steep and nar-



The northern route through the winter trails at Ray Benson Sno-Park features wooden Blowout Shelter, forest burned by the 2003 B&B Complex Fire and views of Three-Fingered Jack and Mount Washington. ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

row that I slipped and fell and had to brace myself before awkwardly sliding downhill and into the trees. I decided to take off my skis and use my snowshoes to climb to the top.

At the end of Twin Buttes, I turned right onto Claypool Butte Trail and followed a remarkably beautiful forested route through dense patches of trees.

There was new snow and little trail to follow, so I had to look carefully for the blue diamonds marking the route. At one point, I came up a rise to a striking view of Mount Washington. It was my favorite part of what had already been an excellent route.

Eventually, Claypool Butte Trail intersected with the South Loop and led me back to the parking lot at Ray Benson Sno-Park.

Overall, this route through an old wildfire scar to a wooden shelter and down a fun and challenging series of hills was my favorite of my series this winter spent at Ray Benson.

### Avoid the crowds

Ray Benson Sno-Park gets extremely crowded on nice weekend days or really any weekend day. Because the sno-park shares an entry road with Hoodoo Ski Area, arriving between 10 a.m. and noon can be a nightmare of slow lines of cars in the snow. To avoid getting stuck with the masses, I always try to arrive before 8 a.m., when the parking lot and trails are very quiet.

### Other notes:

- Make sure you have a sno-park permit. They can be purchased online from the Oregon DMV for \$25 for an annual

pass, \$9 for a 3-day pass or a daily permit for \$4.

- Be sure to be prepared with the winter 10 essentials.

- The trail junctions are well-marked, but it helps to have a map of the network of trails. You can grab one at the sno-park near a big sign with a map of the area.

- If you're interested in getting into cross country skiing, I'd highly recommend joining and getting tips from the Oregon Nordic Club's Willamette Valley chapter.

- Make sure to thank, contribute to or volunteer with the Cascade Volunteers, who do lots of work clearing logs off the trails so we can enjoy it, along with the Mount Jefferson Snowmobile Club.

### In a nutshell: North Loop / Twin Buttes / Claypool Butte / South Loop

**What:** A collection of trails beginning and ending at Ray Benson Sno-Park on Santiam Pass near Hoodoo Ski Area.

**How long:** 6.5 mile loop

**Elevation gain / loss:** 750 feet

**Difficulty:** It's mostly terrain labeled "more difficult" on winter recreation maps. In my opinion, it's about moderate difficulty. You should have some experience going up and down hills.

*Zach Urness has been an outdoors reporter, photographer and videographer in Oregon for 13 years. Urness is the author of "Best Hikes with Kids: Oregon" and "Hiking Southern Oregon." He can be reached at zurness@statesmanjournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at @ZachsORoutdoors.*

## Obituaries

### Marie (Melba) Benz

July 3, 1927 - January 16, 2021

Marie (Melba) Benz was born July 3, 1927, the first of seven children, to Alma and Otis Phillips, in Oklahoma. Before she was of school age, her family moved to the Lake Labish area of Oregon, where they farmed. From a young age, Marie loved dogs, and was always a friend to wayward animals. She graduated from Salem High School, married Earl Benz on January 16, 1948, and was the mother of four.

Earl and Marie opened and operated Benzies Foreign Auto Wrecking Yard. All of her grandchildren remember the automotive smell of Benzies, the big "yard dogs", and Grandma's vast knowledge of untold car parts and pieces and willingness to help friends, family and strangers find exactly what they need.

Helping was a part of her nature. From delivering meals and care packages to neighbors, friends, and family, to lending a helping hand to anyone in need, to always putting the needs of others above her own, she was truly a selfless woman. Devastating heartbreaks in her life sparked a resilience in her. She developed the gift of being able to help others get back up and keep going. From her experiences she became an encourager. Those who knew her said she was the strongest woman they knew.

Marie was passionate about and served many years in the American Legion Auxiliary. A highlight for her was representing Oregon at the National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, 1996. She was recognized and honored for her years of service.

Throughout her life, she loved to travel. She and Earl took several trips to Europe, always including train rides which was probably her favorite mode of transportation. They also traveled to South America, and New Zealand. In her later years, she took several trips and cruises with friends and other family and was able to see Africa, Egypt, the Panama Canal, and Ireland. Wherever she went, she seemed to find new friends. It was said of her, "she never met a stranger". She enjoyed gardening and canning and was famous for her frozen strawberry jam, which she loved sharing with friends and family.

Marie was preceded in death by husband Earl, and two sons, Reginald E. Benz, and Zachary P. Benz. She is survived by daughter Nancy Morris, son Bruce Benz, sister Brenda Phillips, grandchildren Scott Golde, Danielle Mackey, Tiffanie Golde, Leslie Cutler, Lance Benz, Nathan Benz, Jeremy Benz, and 12 great grandchildren.

A private burial will be held at Willamette National Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Marie Benz may be made to Willamette Valley Humane Society at 4642 Turner Road SE, Salem OR 97317



## Art

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For contest rules and a look at previous winning entries, go online to [https://www.dfw.state.or.us/stamp\\_contest/index.asp](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/stamp_contest/index.asp)

Entries will be accepted between Aug. 27 and 5 p.m. Sept. 24 at ODFW headquarters, 4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE, Salem, OR 97302.

### WORST OF TIMES, BEST OF TIMES

One thing that you annually dread is getting a Christmas card returned with a yellow USPS "return to sender" sticker with the message "not deliverable as addressed; unable to forward."

In the case of Jeanne Easterling, widow of the late, great Jerry Easterling, a longtime Statesman writer best known for his folksy "Country Chaff" columns and a longtime fishing and clamming buddy, the yellow sticker came as something of a gut-punch.

According to the online obit in The Nugget, a newspaper in Sisters, Jean-

nie, as she was better-known, died on Nov. 27.

On the flip side, Frank King, three-plus-decade friend and fishing buddy and former Statesman coastal correspondent, is alive and well, according to a recent email.

Frank, celebrated in several of my columns for his halibut-fishing prowess, was evacuated, twice in September, first when his home near Otis was destroyed by the Echo Mountain Fire, then again two days later when the spreading inferno forced a retreat from the motel where Frank and family were sheltering.

No spring chicken – a World War II vet, Frank turned 98 on Oct. 1 – Frank and assorted relatives moved into a leased home in Lincoln City.

He's using his Blue Racer walker to stroll a mile a day, and looking forward to rebuilding his house.

As I said, worst of times, best of times.

**THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:** I asked an old-timer on the Nestucca River if he'd fished there his whole life. He smiled and said, "not yet."

Contact Henry Miller at [HenryMillerSJ@gmail.com](mailto:HenryMillerSJ@gmail.com)



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