

# Average hourly pay in Oregon firms shows downward trend, labor agency says; work week is longer

The average hourly earnings of Oregon's manufacturing production workers slid 13 cents in August to \$7.98. The

State Employment Division's Research and Statistics section has reported. This downturn is characteristic of the

July-to-August trend of previous years. In the wood products industry, average earnings fell

from \$8.90 to \$8.86 per hour. Only veneer and plywood establishments registered a gain of any consequence,

moving from \$8.73 per hour in July to \$8.86 in August. In the primary metals industry, the 15 cent monthly

rise in average hourly earnings (from \$9.35 to \$9.50) was chiefly due to premium vacation pay at firms engaged in

the production of nonferrous metals other than aluminum. In the nondurable goods sector, a more dramatic drop

in average earnings was reported (\$7.42 to \$7.10). In canning and preserving, there was an increase in the proportion of lower-paid seasonal workers to assist primarily in the processing of beans, shrimp, and cod which led to a decline in earnings to 46 cents per hour (from \$5.69 to \$5.46 per hour). And apparel establishments reported a 10 cent per hour drop over-the-month (from \$4.38 to \$4.28 per hour). In the paper and allied products industry, a 16 cents per hour decline was registered (from \$10.83 to \$9.87).

Average statewide workweek in August (39.1 hours) was above both July (39.0) and August, 1978 (38.9 hours). In the durable goods sector, lumber and wood products establishments reported a 40.3 workweek in August as compared to 40.5 hours in July and 39.8 hours in August, 1978. The monthly decline was chiefly due to a shortened workweek because of vacations at logging establishments.

In the nondurable goods sector, the average workweek moved to 37.7 hours in August from 37.0 in July and 38.0 in August, 1978. Seasonal food processing activity led to an increase in the average workweek at canning and preserving establishments from 33.3 hours in July to 36.1 hours in August compared with 37.8 hours in August, 1978.

Textile and apparel firms also registered significant increases. In textiles the workweek registered 38.1 hours in August, 35.0 hours in July and 38.3 hours in August, 1978. In apparel, the workweek averaged 36.3 hours in August, 31.5 hours in July and 35.9 hours in August, 1978.

Average weekly hours for construction workers in Oregon remained unchanged in August from July's level of 36.4 hours and compares with 35.8 hours in August, 1978. Average hourly earnings increased substantially for the third month running to a level of \$12.23 from July's \$12.08 and the \$10.98 level recorded in August, 1978, the State Employment Division reports.

## Cash, not food stamps, due for test

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will conduct a demonstration project to provide cash rather than food stamps to participating households in which every member is either 65 years of age or over or has been determined eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Assistant Secretary Carol Tucker Foreman has announced. SSI is a cash assistance program administered by the Social Security Administration that provides benefits for aged, blind and disabled people.

"The project will examine whether this alternative form of food assistance will encourage participation by eligible elderly and handicapped persons, enabling them to improve their nutrition," Foreman said. "Checks in the amount of their food stamp allotments will be mailed on a monthly basis."

The project is authorized by the Food Stamp Act of 1977. Currently, about half of the eligible households with aged, blind and other handicapped members are participating in the Food Stamp Program.

Eight sites will be selected nationwide, with an urban-rural balance. Project areas may be on a statewide or local basis, and all eligible households in the designated area will participate. The demonstration projects will begin in April 1980 and operate for a year.

The project will also test whether more aged and handicapped will participate if they can apply and be interviewed at a location other than a welfare or food stamp office.

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