

**Washington's average wage grew in 2011 - June 19, 2012****12-024**

OLYMPIA – Washington's average annual wage grew by 3.6 percent in 2011, outpacing Seattle-area inflation by 0.9 percentage points, according to the state Employment Security Department.

The annual average went from \$48,162 in 2010 to \$49,894 in 2011. The average weekly wage rose from \$926 to \$959.

These figures include only those wages that are covered by unemployment insurance.

Much of the increase was driven by a 7.5 percent increase in the number of insured workers earning more than \$75,000. Overall, the number of workers in Washington covered by unemployment insurance grew by 37,764 in 2011, and earnings grew by \$6.6 billion.

"Month to month, we've been seeing strong growth in industries that tend to offer above-average pay, and that seems to be reflected in last year's earnings," said Employment Security Commissioner Paul Trause.

The three industries with the highest wage growth in 2011 were the information sector, with wage growth of 9.5 percent; company management, up 7.9 percent; and manufacturing, up 5 percent.

The 2011 numbers stood in sharp contrast to 2010, when the 2.1 percent rise in the average annual wage was caused mostly by the loss of low-paying jobs. The number of insured workers declined by nearly 32,000 that year, and wages grew by just \$1.2 billion.

The average annual wage is used to calculate unemployment benefits for jobless workers. The minimum weekly unemployment benefit, calculated at 15 percent of the average weekly wage, will increase by \$5 to \$143, for new claims opened on or after July 1. At the same time, the maximum weekly benefit, calculated at 63 percent of the average weekly wage, will increase by \$21, to \$604.

Currently, about 18 percent of unemployment-insurance claims are paid the maximum benefit amount, and 7 percent receive the minimum.

In addition to unemployment benefits, the average annual wage is used in computing employers' unemployment taxes. Beginning in 2013, employers will pay unemployment taxes on the first \$39,800 paid to each employee, up from \$38,200 in 2012.

The state average wage also is used by the Department of Labor & Industries in calculating worker's compensation benefits.

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**Web links**

Employment Security Department – [www.esd.wa.gov](http://www.esd.wa.gov)

**Broadcast version**

Washington's average annual wage grew to 49,894 dollars in 2011 – an increase of three-point-six percent -- according to the state Employment Security Department.

The greatest wage growth was in the information, management, and manufacturing sectors.

The average annual wage is used to compute the minimum and maximum unemployment benefits for jobless workers.

Because of the average-wage increase, the minimum unemployment benefit will increase by five-dollars a week, to one-hundred-forty-three dollars.

The maximum weekly benefit will increase by twenty-one dollars -- to six-hundred-four dollars.