January-February 2012 employment in Milwaukee area establishments is back to early 2011 levels.

In February 2012 estimated employment in the four-county Milwaukee metro area establishments totaled 799,200, similar to the levels reported in February 2011 but down by 23,600 from employment totals last October, according to the CES (Current Employment Statistics) data. Since October, private sector (non-farm) employment was reported down by 21,400 and public sector employment down by 2,200. (See the April 2012 Drilldown for a similar graph for the rest of the state.)

Monthly Employment in Metro Milwaukee Establishments (CES)

Seasonal slowdowns were reported in the construction industry (down by 5,900 jobs since October), leisure and hospitality (down by 5,600), and retail trade (down by 2,500). Two major sectors showed employment increases since the fall: durable manufacturing (where CES estimated an increase from 80,800 jobs in October 2011 to 81,800 in February 2012) and private-sector educational services (where CES reported an increase of 2,400 jobs from 28,200 in October to 30,600 in February).

Monthly Economic Data for Milwaukee County

Unemployment: The estimated unemployment rate in Milwaukee County jumped up to 8.6 percent in January, reversing six consecutive months of declines.

Plant closing and mass layoff notices: In February Frontier Airlines announced additional planned layoffs of 446 workers. Other notices were issued for layoffs at Thermo Fisher Scientific, biological product manufacturing (43 workers); Sodexo, food service contractor (35 workers); HP Enterprise Services, computer related services (23 workers); and Ace Distribution Services, general warehousing and storage (15 workers).

Unemployment insurance: 32,248 laid-off workers in the county were receiving weekly UI payments in mid-March of 2012 -- 6,500 fewer workers than a year ago.

FoodShare: 272,661 county residents received $35.2 million in FoodShare benefits in January. Enrollments were again up 7% over the previous month.

BadgerCare Plus: 206,220 county residents were enrolled in February. The number of single adults in the Core Plan dropped to below 8,500.

Wisconsin Shares and “W-2”: 23,984 children from 13,358 Milwaukee County families received child care subsidies totaling $10.16 million in February 2012. 10,000 Milwaukee County families received “W-2”/TANF cash assistance payments in February.

Data Sources: Wisconsin departments of Children and Families, Health Services, and Workforce Development (3/26/2012). The CES survey is conducted monthly by the Department of Workforce Development in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The metro area includes Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington and Ozaukee counties.