

# Major Work Stoppages

## Tech Note

Major work stoppages are those involving 1,000 or more workers and lasting for at least one full shift, and include worker-initiated strikes as well as employer lockouts. A strike is defined as a temporary stoppage of work by a group of workers (not necessarily union members) to express a grievance or enforce a demand. A lockout is a temporary withholding or denial of employment during a labor dispute in order to enforce terms of employment upon a group of employees. Because of the complexity of these disputes, the Bureau does not attempt to distinguish between strikes and lockouts in its statistics and includes both in the term "work stoppages." Our definition of work stoppages excludes political strikes, work slowdowns, and work-to-rule situations.

Data for the number of workers involved and days idle include all idled workers in establishments directly involved in a stoppage. This "primary idleness" also includes workers from the same establishment who are laid off as a result of the strike. The data do not account for "secondary idleness" resulting from workers laid off in other firms as a result of material or service shortages.

The number of workers involved in a work stoppage can vary dramatically from far below to far above 1,000 during the course of the stoppage; variations occur because of escalation in the number of workers involved, layoffs in the same establishment, or workers returning to work. Our beginning date is that on which at least 1,000 workers became idled. Correspondingly, the ending date is the last date that the number of workers idled was at least 1,000. The number of workers shown represents the estimated maximum number of workers idled during the reference period and is rounded to the nearest hundred.

In the monthly tables, days idle for each stoppage is calculated for all stoppages in effect by summing the number of workdays lost by each affected worker during the month. Days of idleness are based on a 5-day work week unless an establishment, such as a hospital, is in continuous operation; in this case, the actual days of operation and the number of shifts will be taken into account.

In the historical table, days idle for the year is the rounded sum of all monthly stoppages in effect. Days idle for the year is also shown as a percent of total estimated working time. It is calculated by dividing the total days idle for all stoppages occurring during the reference period by the total estimated working time during that period. Total estimated working time is computed by multiplying average total employment during the reference period by the number of days typically worked by most employees during that period. Average total employment figures, which exclude private households, forestry, and fishery employees, are taken from the *Employment and Earnings* news release issued by the BLS Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics.

**Additional information**

For more detailed data, write to Work Stoppage Program, Division of Compensation Data Analysis and Planning, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Avenue NE, Room 4175, Washington, DC 20212-0001.

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