

## The August Review

Last August and September, Louisiana's 397 miles of gulf shoreline were breached twice by significant hurricanes. Hurricane Katrina, the more violent and destructive of the two, also wreaked havoc on the shorelines of Mississippi and Alabama, and tore inland through a wide swath of eastern Louisiana and western Mississippi. Hurricane Rita lashed western Louisiana and eastern Texas. This issue of the *Review* examines the impacts of these storms from several perspectives: labor market impacts on the local economies, program impacts on the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other data-gathering agencies, and the nature of the coastal economy at risk.

An overview leads off this issue, illustrating much of the data developed through the statistical programs of BLS and its partners in the Census Bureau and the State workforce agencies.

Richard L. Clayton and James R. Spletzer analyze what is often the most difficult labor market impact to quantify—the loss of wages among workers physically displaced from their homes and regular workplaces. Using the longitudinal data capabilities of the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Spletzer and Clayton find that several thousand workers from Louisiana had found new jobs in Texas, but often at a significant reduction in wages.

Molly Garber, Linda Unger, James White, and Linda Wohlford describe the efforts taken by BLS and its partners in the State workforce agencies to maintain the Bureau's employment- and wage-measuring programs—QCEW and Current Employment Statistics.

Lawrence S. Cahoon, Diane E. Herz, Richard C. Ning, Anne E. Polivka, Maria E. Reed, Edwin L. Robison, and Gregory

D. Weyland outline the collaboration between the Census Bureau and BLS to keep the Current Population Survey operating, and, in fact producing new data on the labor force status of many who evacuated the damaged areas.

Sharon P. Brown, Sandra Mason, and Richard Tiller describe the response of the Local Area Unemployment Statistics program to the challenges presented by the hurricanes' destruction.

Sharon P. Brown and Patrick Carey explain the impact of the hurricanes on the operations and outputs of the Mass Layoffs Statistics program.

Charles S. Colgan and Jefferey Atkins use an innovative classification technique to assess what was at risk in the coastal economy as the hurricanes came ashore.

## Injuries and health workers

More than half of the work-related injuries and illnesses among nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides are related to overexertion. Among workers in general, about a quarter of injuries and illnesses are the result of overexertion. Most of the cases of overexertion among nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides result from lifting patients. To find out more, see "Occupational Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities among Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides, 1995–2004," in *Compensation and Working Conditions Online*, June 2006.

## Workers at minimum wage

The share of hourly workers reporting earnings at or below the Federal minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour in 2005 ranged from less than 1 percent of workers in management, professional, and related occupations; natural resources; construction; and maintenance occupations to about 8 percent of service workers.

Within the service occupations, about 17 percent of food preparation and serving related workers had earnings at or below \$5.15 per hour. About 3 in 4 workers earning \$5.15 or less in 2005 were employed in service occupations, mostly in food pre-paration and serving jobs. It should be noted that the presence of workers with wages below the minimum does not necessarily indicate violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as there are exemptions, such as tip credits, to the minimum wage provision of the law.

To learn more about workers paid at or below the minimum wage, see "Characteristics of Minimum Wage Workers: 2005" on the Internet at [www.bls.gov/cps/minwage2005.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cps/minwage2005.htm).

## Productivity in information

Productivity, as measured by output per hour, increased in 2004 in 6 of the 8 information industries studied for a recent report. Double-digit productivity growth occurred in software publishers at 17.0 percent, wireless telecommunications carriers at 19.1 percent, and cable and other program distribution at 12.4 percent. Productivity declined in the newspaper, book, and directory publishers industry and in radio and television broadcasting. Additional information is available from "Productivity and Costs by Industry: Selected Service-Providing and Mining Industries, 2004," news release USDL 06–1201. □

Communications regarding the *Monthly Labor Review* may be sent to the Editor-in-Chief at the addresses on the inside front cover.

The news release discussed above is available at:

[www.bls.gov/bls/newsrels.htm](http://www.bls.gov/bls/newsrels.htm).