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## WYOMING DOLES OUT \$161 MILLION IN UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS



In Wyoming, the state's Department of Employment reported Monday it paid out more than \$161 million in unemployment benefits in 2009, which is the highest amount since 1982. More than 37,300 people lost their jobs and collected unemployment insurance last year in Wyoming, according to the department. The *Associated Press* reports the largest increase in unemployment benefits came from lost jobs in the mining industry. Job losses were up 340 percent in that sector as compared to 2008. In fact, two-thirds of all job losses came in mining and construction. Local reports note those are the same sectors that made Wyoming the top state for job growth from 2006 to 2008. Wyoming's average weekly unemployment benefit was \$346 last year, which is a 14.6 percent increase from 2008. The unemployment rate for December in Wyoming was 7.5 percent, more than double that of a year earlier when it was 3.4 percent.

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