

## EMPLOYMENT AND COMPENSATION RISING IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY OF CONNECTICUT



There is an uptick in compensation and employment in the manufacturing industry of Connecticut, as more and more companies are looking to hire employees from a thin workforce. "A lot of us are growing right now, so we are getting more people involved," said Chris DiPentima, president of Middletown metal fabricator Pegasus Manufacturing. The manufacturing industry was the third largest provider of compensation in Connecticut in 2010 despite years of losses. The finance industry and the government were one and two in compensation. These industries bested the health care industry, which increased by 19.3 percent in five years. There was a total of \$15.6 billion of compensation in the manufacturing industry of Connecticut, which was up from the \$15.5 billion the previous year. There was a total compensation value of \$4.9 billion in the manufacturing industry for Hartford County. The manufacturing industry in Hartford, Tolland and New Haven counties was the third largest provider of compensation. In the counties of Middlesex and Fairfield, the category was the second largest compensator. Manufacturing was the largest compensator in Litchfield County. "A lot of us are doing really well now, so we want to keep our employees happy," DiPentima said. "A stable workforce goes a long way because you don't have to backfill employees and train their replacements." In the first 11 months of 2011, the average manufacturing employment numbers hit 167,100. This could be the first annual increase in employment for Connecticut since 1998. "The key thing in 2011 was caution. They were hiring for very specific positions," said Jerry Clupper, executive director of the New Haven Manufacturers Association. "That is the mindset most of the companies are in." Compensation per employee rose in 2011 as employment rose. Production employees were able to average \$1,000.38 in weekly pay through the first 11 months of the year. This was the first time ever that weekly production pay went over the \$1,000 mark. Also an all-time high was the overall average weekly pay, which came in at \$1,206.57. "They are really multifunction people now," Clupper said. "They have to be able to operate in a collaborative environment." "When we have people who think about leaving ... we like to think about pay increases," DiPentima said. DiPentima estimates that the 5,000 manufacturers in Connecticut currently have anywhere from 15,000-20,000 jobs openings. These companies are having trouble filling those positions because of the inability to find workers who have the skills to work in those roles. "The big push for manufacturing is workforce development," DiPentima said. Stephen Papish, the president of Radial Bearing, said the following: "If the kids coming out of high school aren't going to college, you would think manufacturing would be a good fit for them," Papish said. "But you don't see that much of a desire to learn... It is more a function of the motivation of the individual."