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Montana wood products industry makes strong comeback

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MONTANA WOOD PRODUCTS INDUSTRY MAKES STRONG COMEBACK

MISSOULA--

A surge in nationwide construction has assisted Montana's hard-hit wood products industry in making a strong comeback, according to a University of Montana business research office.

The Bureau of Business and Economic Research reports that wages and employment for first quarter 1982 are dramatically up from a year ago. In addition, almost all types of plants operated at increased levels, with statewide lumber production up nearly 70 percent.

Information on the state's wood products industry is gathered quarterly by the bureau in cooperation with the Montana Wood Products Association.

First-quarter wages paid to production workers totaled nearly \$24 million. That amounts to a 45 percent increase over a year ago when only \$16 million was paid out to employees.

Production employment also increased substantially over the past 12 months. An average of 4,100 employees worked each month during first quarter 1983. That compares to an average of 3,100 production workers on the job each month during first quarter 1982. In addition, the proportion of workers on curtailed shifts decreased significantly from a year ago.

Bureau researchers point out that even with the improved situation, employment in the industry was still below the level expected in a normal year.

A "normal" year for the industry is defined as one where there are between 1.5 and 1.6 million housing starts nationwide. That would mean 4,800 full-time

(over)

production workers at work each month during a normal year.

These figures refer only to production workers at mill sites and do not include the several thousand workers in logging, trucking, and other related areas.

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The Montana Wood Products Industry
First Quarter 1982

	<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>
Number of mills operating at normal level			
1982	5	5	5
1983	26	29	31
Total production workers			
1982	3,542	3,149	3,247
1983	3,884	4,174	4,304
Total production wages			
1982	\$5,635,000	\$5,077,000	\$5,646,000
1983	7,462,000	7,468,000	8,791,000

Source: University of Montana, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Forest Industries Information System (Missoula, Montana, 1983).

Notes: The mills included in the survey account for approximately 90 percent of the total production of the wood products industry in the state. The number of mills surveyed increased from 34 in 1982 to 35 in 1983. First quarter 1982 figures are revised.