STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS IDLE 189,000 WORKERS IN 2007

Major work stoppages idled more than twice as many employees in 2007 than the previous year, but total worktime lost as a result fell by half. The number of new lockouts or strikes involving 1,000 workers or more rose to 21 last year from the 20 initiated in 2006, according to the annual report on major work stoppages released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Strikes and lockouts that began in 2007 idled 189,000 workers, 119,000 more than the 70,000 employees involved in major work stoppages the prior year.

Despite the increase in workers idled, the number of workdays lost because of all major work stoppages that occurred last year, including those initiated in 2006, fell to 1.3 million days, less than half the 2.7 million days of worktime lost the preceding year. Of the 21 major work stoppages that began in 2007, 12 were in the private sector and nine were in state and local government, mainly public transportation and education. Private industry strikes and lockouts accounted for just under two-thirds of total workers idled and 85 percent of lost workdays.

Within private industry, manufacturing accounted for the highest number of new work stoppages last year, at four, followed by construction with three. Including two strikes and lockouts that began in 2006 and continued in 2007, 24 major work stoppages were in effect for at least part of last year, the same as in 2006. The largest new work stoppage in terms of lost workdays was the nationwide strike by members of the Writers Guild of America against the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers beginning in early November. The job action involving about 10,500 employees resulted in the loss of 409,500 workdays in 2007 and additional worktime this year before union members voted to return to work.

The next largest work stoppage was a two-day strike in September by members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) against General Motors Corp. (GM), which idled 74,000 employees, for a loss of 148,000 days of worktime. The strike also involved the most workers of any work stoppage last year.

The third largest work stoppage in 2007 was another strike by UAW members against the International Truck and Engine Corp., which involved 3,700 manufacturing workers in Illinois and several other states and lasted seven weeks. The strike resulted in a total loss of 133,200 days of work before the union and the company in December reached a tentative agreement on a new contract.

The Writers Guild strike was the longest new work stoppage, with a duration of eight weeks in 2007, while six strikes or lockouts lasted two days or less. The average duration of new major work stoppages last year was 10.5 days, down from 26.5 days in 2006.
