

Fed Letter



Kansas City Fed Web site gets new look and address

The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City's Web site has a new look and address. The Web site has been redesigned to include new navigation, quick links to commonly used resources, and content-rich descriptions of information added to the Web site. Across the top of the Web site are drop-down menus that link visitors to all of the site's content. The home page is divided into three sections: biographical information about Bank leadership and economic news, detailed descriptions and links to new content on the Web site, and quick links to various resources and services offered by Bank departments and external sources.

In addition to the redesigned look, the Web address has changed from www.kc.frb.org to www.kansascityfed.org. Visitors who use the old Web address will be rerouted automatically to www.kansascityfed.org for a limited time. Regular visitors to the Web site should adjust their "bookmarks" or "favorites" to reflect the change.

Defining "Rural" America

Rural analysts often face difficulties in studying rural communities based on the Census Bureau's definition of rural places as those with fewer than 2,500 residents. Many of these analysts have chosen to define "rural" according to a county's metropolitan status instead. Following the 2000 Census, the Office of Management and Budget created a new classification system that includes the designation "micropolitan" for communities that fall between the "rural" definition of up to 2,500 residents and the "metropolitan" definition of 50,000 or more residents.

Further explanation of the new classification system and how researchers can use it to improve the public's understanding of the rural economy are explored in the July issue of *The Main Street Economist*. Read the publication on our Web site (www.kansascityfed.org). In the right column, click, "Center for the Study of Rural America," then "*The Main Street Economist*," and then "July 2004: Defining Rural America."

Beige Book released

The latest edition of the Beige Book was released Sept. 8. The Beige Book is a summary of current economic conditions in each Federal Reserve district. Nationally, economic activity continued to expand in late July and August; however, several districts indicated that the pace had slowed since the last report. Districts reported a slowing of household spending, but there were improvements in the manufacturing sector, especially among capital equipment and other durable goods makers. Locally, the Tenth District's economy expanded moderately with improvements in consumer spending, labor markets, manufacturing activity, and energy activity. However, housing activity eased slightly, and commercial real estate remained weak.

For details about national and Tenth District economic activity, visit our Web site at www.kansascityfed.org. In the left column, under "Economic News," click "Beige Book."

Holiday reminder

The Fed will be closed **Monday, Oct. 11**, for Columbus Day. A listing of the holidays observed by the Federal Reserve System is available at www.frb services.org. In the left column, click "Holiday Schedules."

**Preliminary
Symposium
papers available
online**

The preliminary papers and program from the 2004 Symposium are available on our Web site. The topic at this year's Symposium, which was held Aug. 26-28, in Jackson Hole, Wyo., was "Global Demographic Change: Economic Impacts and Policy Challenges."

To view the preliminary papers, go to www.kansascityfed.org, in the right column, click the "Economic Symposium Jackson Hole" button, and then "2004."

**Manufacturing
survey released**

The monthly manufacturing survey for the Tenth Federal Reserve District was released Sept. 13. The survey asks plant managers about a variety of manufacturing indicators. The information is compiled into a snapshot of manufacturing in the District. Manufacturing activity in the Tenth District continued to expand during August. The year-over-year production index was near a record high, expectations for future factory activity remained strong, and future hiring plans improved. However, price indexes eased slightly, and expectations for future price increases also moderated.

To view the current survey, visit our Web site (www.kansascityfed.org). In the left column, under "Economic News," click "Manufacturing Survey," and then "Current Survey (September 13, 2004)."

**Regulatory
developments
Implementing
the Central Data
Repository for bank
financial data**

On Aug. 31, the federal banking agencies announced that they will target implementing the Central Data Repository (CDR) for one of the first two Call Report periods of 2005. A specific date will be announced by the end of the year.

Originally scheduled for implementation in October 2004, the system's start date was postponed in July to address industry feedback and to allow more time for testing and enrollment. The decision to delay implementation beyond 2004 was made to ensure that rollout of the new system would not increase burden for those bankers with additional reporting requirements at the end of the year.

The agencies and industry focus groups currently are evaluating the schedule and will post detailed information and a new timeline on the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council's (FFIEC) Web site, www.FFIEC.gov/FIND later this year. In the meantime, banks will continue filing their Call Report data in the same manner they do today.

**Proposed Amendment
to Regulation E**

On Sept. 13, the Federal Reserve requested public comment on proposed amendments to Regulation E, which implements the Electronic Fund Transfer Act, and the regulation's official staff commentary. The proposed revisions to the regulation would provide guidance regarding the rights, liabilities, and responsibilities of the parties engaged in electronic check conversion transactions and would provide that payroll card accounts are "accounts" covered by Regulation E. Among the proposed changes, persons, such as merchants and other payees, who use information from a check to initiate an electronic fund transfer from a consumer's account would be required to provide notice to the consumer for each electronic fund transfer and obtain the consumer's authorization for the transaction. Currently, merchants and other payees that engage in electronic check conversion transactions are not covered by Regulation E. In addition, the regulation would be revised to provide that payroll card accounts that are established either directly or indirectly by an employer on behalf of a consumer for the purpose of providing salary, wages, or other employee compensation on a recurring basis are covered by Regulation E. Proposed commentary revisions would provide guidance on preauthorized electronic transfers from a consumer's account, additional electronic check conversion issues, error resolution, and other matters.

Comments are due by **Nov. 19, 2004**.

**Brochure on Internet
“phishing”**

The federal bank, thrift, and credit union agencies released an informational brochure on the Internet’s latest scam. The new ruse, known as “phishing” (pronounced fishing), dupes individuals into revealing personal information, such as account and social security numbers, through phony e-mails and simulated Web sites.

The brochure is available on our Web site (www.kansascityfed.org). Point to “Consumer Information,” then click “Identity Theft,” and then “Internet Pirates -Avoid Being a Victim.”

Internet access

Regulatory developments like those above can be obtained from our Web site at www.kansascityfed.org. Point to “Banking Information” on the home page, then click “Regulations/Guidance,” and select either of the first two categories, as appropriate.

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Editor: Lori Cram

Supervisor: Lowell Jones

Graphic Designer: Beth Norman