

Uninsured in Washington state jumps nearly 21 percent

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler revealed in a news conference this morning that last year's 726,000 uninsured has spiked 21 percent to a record 876,000. "This year in Washington state, nearly 1 in 5 people between the ages of 19 and 64 will have no health insurance," said Kreidler. "These are not just statistics. They are people you know - family, friends, neighbors, colleagues. Maybe even you." According to Kreidler, 150,000 Washington residents are or will become uninsured this year. This number includes: 95,000 workers who lost health insurance when they lost their jobs. Their 15,000 dependents who have lost coverage as well. And the 40,000 people scheduled to be cut from the state's Basic Health plan this year.

To help put this in perspective Kreidler listed the cities whose combined populations equal the new number of uninsured. They are: Tacoma, Spokane, Vancouver, Everett, Bellingham, Wenatchee, Yakima, and Port Angeles. "As staggering as 876,000 uninsured sounds, this number does not include people with jobs, but whose employer no longer offers insurance, or those who drop coverage because they can no longer afford their employer's health plan," he added. "The rising number of uninsured has always been a moral issue, but today it's clearly an economic issue." "Unfortunately, there are no easy answers," said Kreidler. "Today, we're launching a new web resource guide on our home page (<http://www.insurance.wa.gov/>). But I'll be candid, it's not enough. For many people there are no options. The only meaningful solution is health care reform." Kreidler stressed that any successful reform must be universal and portable - not tied to employment. And it must include consumer choice and be built on the private system we have today. "I'm hopeful Congress will deliver health care reform," he said. "But I'm not sitting back and waiting. I've been meeting with leaders in our nation's capitol and will continue to do so. Everyone needs to do their part. If we fail to act, we will see one million people living without health insurance in our state."