

1 in 10 Americans Gets Food Stamps

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Roughly one in 10 Americans is now receiving federal food-stamp benefits, an all-time high that's likely to increase as the economy worsens and more people are out of work.

The national numbers are amplified in West Virginia, where the most recent federal figures show more than 281,000 residents -- nearly one-sixth of the state's population -- are receiving monthly benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the new name for the food-stamp program.

Nationally, more than 31.5 million people received food-stamp benefits in September, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That's the highest total recorded, surpassing the old record of 27.4 million in 1994.

Even people receiving food stamps have recently been turning to food banks and soup kitchens to keep from going hungry, said Teresa Burdette, vice president of the Direct Action Welfare Group in Charleston.

"It's very difficult for people right now," she said.

The federal government, which supplies 100 percent of the funding for benefits and splits the cost of administration and nutrition education with the states, spent more than \$34.6 billion on food-stamp benefits in the last fiscal year, an increase from \$30.3 billion the year before.

Kentucky reported a 7 percent climb in its food-stamp program since September 2007, Virginia had a 9 percent rise and Maryland 16 percent.