Staff cutbacks and salary give-backs – especially at the upper end of the food chain – meant a drop in salaries in both radio and television news. That’s the first time that’s happened in the 15 years I’ve been doing the RTNDA/Hofstra University Annual Survey.

Overall, TV news salaries fell 4.4 percent in 2008, and radio news salaries slid by 1.8 percent. Tack on inflation at 3.8 percent, and real wages (adjusted for inflation) fell by 8.2 percent in TV news and 5.6 percent in radio news.

Television News Salaries – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| News Director | $89,000  | $76,000  | $12,000  | $200,000  |
| Assistant News Director | 68,600  | 65,000  | 40,000  | 145,000  |
| Managing Editor | 60,200  | 55,500  | 40,000  | 140,000  |
| Executive Producer | 54,900  | 54,000  | 35,000  | 140,000  |
| News Anchor | 72,600  | 57,500  | 12,000  | 500,000  |
| Weathercaster | 63,700  | 50,000  | 14,000  | 600,000  |
| Sports Anchor | 54,000  | 41,000  | 11,000  | 300,000  |
| News Reporter | 33,000  | 26,000  | 17,000  | 250,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 42,500  | 29,000  | 19,000  | 110,000  |
| Assignment Editor | 40,300  | 35,000  | 20,000  | 95,000  |
| News Producer | 32,300  | 28,500  | 12,000  | 110,000  |
| News Writer | 31,900  | 26,000  | 15,000  | 75,000  |
| News Assistant | 27,600  | 25,000  | 10,000  | 45,000  |
| Photographer | 29,300  | 28,000  | 15,000  | 110,000  |
| Tape Editor | 34,700  | 25,000  | 12,000  | 84,000  |
| Graphics Specialist | 30,700  | 28,500  | 16,000  | 80,000  |
| Internet Specialist | 36,900  | 33,000  | 20,000  | 95,000  |
| Art Director | 51,600  | 50,000  | 29,000 | 90,000  |

Television news salaries are down across the board, although some are down much more than others. Hardest hit: on air positions, with reporters down 13.3 percent, news anchors down 11.5 percent, weathercasters down 9.1 percent and sports anchors down 8.9 percent. The only jobs not dropping were assignment editors and art directors, both of which stayed largely even. Because the largest, highest-paying stations can raise the average salaries out of proportion, the median -- or midpoint -- is usually considered a better gauge of typical salaries.

Median TV News Salaries by Market Size – 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 – 25 | 26 – 50 | 51 – 100 | 101-150 | 150+ |
| News Director | $155,000  | $125,000  | $99,000  | $70,000  | $53,500  |
| Assistant News Director | 100,000  | 80,000  | 65,000  | 43,800  | 48,000  |
| Managing Editor | 85,000  | 68,500  | 50,000  | 51,000  | 45,500  |
| Executive Producer | 76,500  | 66,500  | 46,400  | 42,500  | 32,000  |
| News Anchor | 130,000  | 104,300  | 76,000  | 53,000  | 38,900  |
| Weathercaster | 130,300  | 100,500  | 64,500  | 45,000  | 35,000  |
| Sports Anchor | 100,000  | 80,000  | 50,300  | 39,500  | 30,000  |
| News Reporter | 65,000  | 47,800  | 32,500  | 24,000  | 21,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 58,000  | 40,000  | 33,000  | 25,000  | 22,000  |
| Assignment Editor | 46,000  | 40,000  | 38,000  | 30,500  | 28,000  |
| News Producer | 46,000  | 40,000  | 32,000  | 25,000  | 22,000  |
| News Writer | 36,500  | 32,000  | 23,000  | 23,500  | \*  |
| News Assistant | 34,000  | 37,500  | 24,500  | 20,500  | 23,000  |
| Photographer | 45,300  | 35,800  | 30,000  | 22,000  | 21,000  |
| Tape Editor | 41,500  | 29,500  | 25,000  | 19,000  | 18,000  |
| Graphics Specialist | 40,000  | 34,000  | 26,500  | 22,000 | 22,000  |
| Internet Specialist | 45,000  | 40,000  | 33,000  | 32,000  | 25,500  |
| Art Director | 55,000  | 55,000  | 29,000  | \*  | \*  |

As usual, the larger the market, the larger the salary. The top 25 market salaries would be even higher, but it also includes a number of smaller, independent newsrooms which generally pay lower salaries than their network-affiliated counterparts. Although TV news salaries, overall, were down for 2008, the picture is more complicated market by market. In fact, in most markets, more salaries rose than fell – except in markets 51 – 100, where more median salaries fell than rose. In markets 26 – 50, more salaries fell or stayed the same than went up, and it was pretty near dead even in the largest markets.

\*Insufficient data

Median TV News Salaries by Staff Size –2009

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 51+ | 31-50 | 21-30 | 11-20 | 1-10 |
| News Director | $140,000  | $90,000  | $70,000  | $55,000  | $45,000  |
| Assistant News Director | 86,000  | 60,000  | 45,000  | 40,000  | 39,000  |
| Managing Editor | 75,000  | 54,000  | 40,500  | 41,000  | \*  |
| Executive Producer | 65,000  | 50,000  | 40,000  | 33,000  | 35,000  |
| News Anchor | 122,500  | 70,000  | 50,000  | 40,000  | 35,000  |
| Weathercaster | 104,300  | 57,000  | 42,000  | 35,000  | 31,000  |
| Sports Anchor | 82,500  | 43,500  | 36,000  | 28,000  | 22,000  |
| News Reporter | 49,000  | 30,000  | 23,000  | 22,500  | 23,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 41,500  | 30,000  | 23,500  | 23,000  | 21,000  |
| Assignment Editor | 40,000  | 38,000  | 32,000  | 26,000  | 25,500  |
| News Producer | 42,000  | 30,000  | 25,000  | 22,000  | \*  |
| News Writer | 32,000  | 26,000  | 22,000  | 25,000  | 15,000  |
| News Assistant | 35,000  | 23,000  | 19,000  | \*  | 16,000  |
| Photographer | 36,300  | 28,000  | 22,700  | 20,800  | 30,000  |
| Tape Editor | 32,000  | 25,000  | 19,500  | 31,000  | 20,000  |
| Graphics Specialist | 38,000 | 25,000  | 25,000  | 29,000  | 16,000  |
| Internet Specialist | 40,000  | 33,000  | 26,000  | 29,500  | 24,000  |
| Art Director | 55,000  | 42,500  | 29,000  | \*  | \*  |

When we look at salaries by staff size, we get a different picture of what 2008 was like. Stations with 21 or more news employees all had more salaries that went down from the year before than went up or stayed the same. Stations with 11 – 20 news people had more salaries going up, and the smallest stations were just about even. Salaries at stations not affiliated with the four major networks were noticeably lower – as were salaries at PBS affiliates. Salaries in the Northeast tended to be a little higher, but, otherwise, there were no real differences. With rare exception, the bigger the newsroom, the bigger the salaries.

\*Insufficient data