

# Jobless numbers improve

## Seasonal hiring boosts payrolls

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SANTA CRUZ — Jobs in agriculture and the amusement industry helped drive the local unemployment rate down to 8.5 percent in April, a 10 percent drop from March.

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The decline is typical for this time a year, when the demand for farmworkers rises dramatically. Unemployment is still nearly 35 percent higher than last year, when the local jobless rate was 6.5 percent — the lowest rate for April in more than a decade.

In Santa Clara County, the home of high-tech jobs and destination of thousands of local commuters, unemployment remained relatively stable for the third straight month at 7.4 percent. That's dramatically higher than April 2001, when the unemployment rate was 2.7 percent.

About 1,400 more residents were working in April compared to March, according to a preliminary report from the state's Employment Development Department.

Approximately 1,500 jobs opened up for farmworkers in Santa Cruz County, where growers are entering the peak of their season. The strawberry industry represents the biggest spike in the farm-related employment numbers, said Jess

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# Jobs

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Brown, executive director of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau. Jobs picking strawberries typically last into the fall, he said.

About 200 jobs opened in the amusement and recreation industries in April, according to the report. The Boardwalk hired 126 new employees in March and 63 in April, bringing its total to 875. It will employ 1,100 at the peak of summer, said JoAnne Dlott, vice president of human resources for the Seaside Co.

The Boardwalk received an unusually high number of applicants from UC Santa Cruz students, Dlott said. Fewer internships and other job opportunities for the college students may be the reason, she said.

"We are able to be a little more selective than we have in the past. The background and experience of the applicants this year are really good," she said.

About 100 jobs were lost in business services and another 100 in local government in April, according to the report.

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### Jobless rates

#### COUNTY

April '02	8.5%
March '02	9.6%
April '01	6.5%

#### STATE

April '02	6.4%
March '02	6.5%
April '01	5.0%

#### NATION

April '02	6.0%
March '02	5.7%
April '01	4.5%

### Jobs online

[www.SantaCruzJobs.com](http://www.SantaCruzJobs.com)

[www.usworks.com/santacruzwb/](http://www.usworks.com/santacruzwb/)