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County's Jobless Hits 12.4%

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Santa Cruz County's unemployment rate continued its upward climb during the month of January with 12.4 per cent of the area's labor force out of a job during the first month of the year.

Despite earlier predictions that area unemployment had "leveled off," official figures released Monday show a 2.6 per cent increase over December's jobless figure.

January's total in the county for unemployment during the first month of the year surpasses both state and national unemployment rates.

Yet, both state and local officials say the unemployment rate has not reached its highest peak.

"Our unemployment usually peaks out in February or March," said Jim Hammond, manager of the local employment development department. "We're looking for the rate to go even higher."

He pointed out that January is typically a high unemployment month, but said the figure is much higher than normal.

According to state statistics, some 8,300 people were unemployed in the county during January.

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