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Job hunters try luck with county

By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

People are lining up to work for Santa Cruz County, and the line is getting longer and longer during the current recession.

"We usually get about 5,000 applications a year. We received that many just in the last three months," county Personnel Director Mary Lou Alexander said yesterday.

The county has 2,300 employees; there's a 14 percent annual turnover rate.

"We're getting more white-collar workers in our reception area" than in the past, said Alexander, who has also noticed more applications from consultants. She has also noticed more applications from state workers who are afraid of being laid off or those who have already lost state jobs.

Consultants "are not getting as many (government) contracts" these days because governments are doing more "in-house" studies, Alexander said.

The result is that consultants want to get into the house, where they will have a steady paycheck.

Alexander said the county received 175 applications for openings as a code-compliance in-

spector in the Planning Department. The pay is \$2,100 a month.

For an engineering position that had traditionally been difficult to fill, the county received 85 applications after preparing and distributing a recruiting brochure.

The positions that draw the most applications, Alexander said, are those that don't require previous government experience.

With more people applying for jobs, "we have a higher failure rate on our tests," Alexander said, despite efforts to screen out those who obviously don't qualify.

The 5,000 applications in the last three months don't include the Human Resources and Health Services agencies, which have their own personnel departments.

Government employees have traditionally been relatively safe from layoffs, but Alexander said there may be some this year because of the state's continuing budget problems. The county is dependent on the state for a large share of its budget.

"It's just speculation at this point," she said.