

Unemployment continues to drop in Santa Cruz County

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Labor Force Data for Sub-County Areas

SANTA CRUZ — The county's preliminary October employment figures continue the steady gains the region has seen over the past few months.

"For one curious reason or another, Santa Cruz continues to expand and grow jobs, and it's pretty much across the board," said Eric Alexander, a Capitola-based labor-market consultant for the region. "Right next door in Monterey County, you don't get the same picture."

The data are prepared by the Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, and are not adjusted for seasonality.

The labor force in the county grew from 140,600 in October 2003 to 143,100 in October 2004, an increase of 1.8 percent.

Employment grew from 131,400 in October 2003 to 134,900 in October 2004, an increase of 2.7 percent.

Unemployment dropped from 9,200 in October 2003 to 8,100 in October 2004, a decrease of 12 percent. The unemployment rate in

| Area name | Labor force | Employment number | Unemployment number | Rate |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Santa Cruz County | 143,000 | 134,900 | 8,100 | 5.7 percent |
| Aptos | 6,130 | 5,960 | 170 | 2.7 percent |
| Ben Lomond | 5,230 | 5,010 | 220 | 4.1 percent |
| Capitola | 6,650 | 6,370 | 280 | 4.2 percent |
| Freedom | 4,440 | 3,870 | 570 | 12.7 percent |
| Live Oak | 9,170 | 8,930 | 240 | 2.6 percent |
| Rio del Mar | 5,870 | 5,700 | 170 | 3.0 percent |
| Santa Cruz | 31,890 | 30,310 | 1,580 | 5.0 percent |
| Scotts Valley | 5,190 | 5,030 | 160 | 3.1 percent |
| Soquel | 5,930 | 5,700 | 230 | 4.0 percent |
| Watsonville | 17,080 | 15,030 | 2,050 | 12.0 percent |

Not seasonally adjusted.

Source: Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division.

the county was 5.7 percent in October, in line with the state rate of 5.6 percent.

The national unemployment rate for October was 5.1 percent.

Total jobs in all industries increased from 103,300 in October 2003 to 104,600 in October 2004, an increase of 1.3 percent.

Total farm jobs saw an 18.9 percent drop in employment numbers from September to October, which

Alexander said was typical at the end of summer harvest season.

"It will continue to drop," he said, "but it's interesting to note that there are 300 more people working in farm now as opposed to last year at this time."

In October 2004, 10,300 were employed in farm jobs, compared with 10,000 in October 2003.

Manufacturing dropped by 100 jobs over the year, which "is vir-

tually stable," said Alexander. The high-tech sector of manufacturing remained stable, not losing or gaining any jobs, while residual miscellaneous manufacturing saw a drop of 5.6 percent and residual textile mills had a drop of 10 percent from October 2003 to October 2004.

Arts, entertainment and recreation dropped 5 percent between September and October, but

employment was up 11.8 percent compared with last year. Alexander attributed the rise to the improvement in the larger economy, giving people more money to spend.

"It's nothing spectacular, but it's all positive," said Alexander of October's figures. "It keeps moving forward."

In the labor force data for sub-county areas for October, Freedom and Watsonville saw high unemployment figures as a result of seasonal employment, said Alexander.

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