

Jobless rate up on farm losses

Seasonal declines push
county unemployment
to 12.1 percent

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SANTA CRUZ — Unemployment in Santa Cruz County typically jumps in November due to a seasonal drop in farm jobs, and this year is no exception, pushing the jobless rate up to 12.1 percent from 10.8 percent in October.

"It happens this time of year," said labor analyst Jorge Villalobos, noting unemployment rose from 6.5 percent to 8.3 percent from October to November in 2008.

There were 99,200 people with jobs, down from 101,200 a year ago, when the economy was bolstered by 2,900 more nonfarm jobs.

Villalobos said "we probably will" see higher jobless figures for December, based on what has happened over the past 19 years.

Unemployment stands at 12.2 percent in California and 9.4 percent in the nation, according to the state Employment Develop-

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ment Department, which released the figures Friday.

Watsonville, home to the county's ag industry, bore the brunt of the increase, with joblessness rising to 25 percent compared to 22.3 percent the month before.

Boulder Creek, a bedroom community for tech workers in Silicon Valley, continued to see double-digit unemployment, at 12.7 percent. Santa Cruz's rate was at 10.1 percent.

Areas with the least unemployment were Aptos, 4.4 percent, and Scotts Valley, 5.4 percent.

November's bright spots were an increase of 500 jobs — more than usual — in state government education, a category that includes UC Santa Cruz, and an increase of 200 retail jobs, which is

typical for this time of year.

Leisure and hospitality shed 100 jobs, with a drop of 300 in food service and drinking establishments and an increase of 100 in arts and entertainment.

Villalobos noted that sector is holding up better than usual, because typically 300 jobs would be lost at this time.

Construction dropped 100 jobs, a seasonal decline.

Compared to a year ago, the picture looks gloomier with construction, manufacturing, trade and government losing 500 jobs or more. Construction is down 800 jobs, and trade down 700.

"The year-over-year change is significant," Villalobos said, noting "a lot of negatives."

He pointed out that the picture is similar in Monterey County, where ag is a large part of the economy.

Unemployment there

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY EMPLOYMENT				
INDUSTRY	NOV.	CHANGE FROM OCT.	CHANGE FROM NOV. 08	HISTORIC CHANGE
Government	22,400	500	(600)	200
Trade, transportation & utilities	17,200	200	(700)	200
Private educational & health services	12,600	100	(100)	100
Manufacturing	5,600	0	(500)	(100)
Information	1,000	0	0	0
Financial activities	3,300	0	(100)	0
Professional & business services	9,800	0	0	(100)
Other services	4,100	0	0	0
Leisure & hospitality	10,800	(100)	(100)	(300)
Mining, logging and construction	3,500	(100)	(800)	(100)
Total nonfarm	90,300	600	(2,900)	(100)
Total farm	8,900	(2,500)	900	(2,600)
Total all industries	99,200	(1,900)	(2,000)	(2,700)

SOURCE: State Employment Development Department

in November reached 12.1 percent, with a loss of 6,800 farm jobs. A loss of 5,500 ag jobs is typical for this time

of year. Retail also was a bright spot there, with an increase of 300 jobs.