

# County unemployment rises

*unemployment* 12-13-03  
Loss of jobs result of seasonal decline in tourism, agriculture

By **KAREN A. DAVIS**  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

✓ **SANTA CRUZ** — The unemployment rate here jumped to 7.6 percent in November, leaving 11,000 of the county's 145,500-member labor force jobless.

That's up from a revised 6.4 percent in October, but an improvement from a year ago when 8.5 percent of the county's workers unemployed.

The county's economy is driven by agriculture and tourism and statistics released Friday by the state Employment Development Department make that seasonal dependence clear.

As the holiday shopping season kicked off the day after Thanksgiving, the retail trade sector gained 200 jobs to stand at 13,900 workers. That sector includes general merchandise and food and beverage stores.

With packages being shipped and store and grocery shelves waiting to be stocked with gifts for under the tree and food for holiday tables, the transportation and warehousing sector gained 100 jobs.

But as the apple, lettuce and strawberry harvests ended

## Jobless rate

### SANTA CRUZ COUNTY 2003

**November:** 7.6 percent  
**October:** 6.4 percent  
**September:** 5.7 percent  
**August:** 6.2 percent  
**July:** 6.8 percent  
**June:** 7.0 percent  
**May:** 7.3 percent  
**April:** 9.2 percent  
**March:** 10.6 percent  
**February:** 11.1 percent  
**January:** 11.2 percent

here, a 24 percent drop in farm jobs left 2,500 farm workers without employment for the month. And with many tourist attractions staffed down or closed for the winter, the entertainment and recreation sector lost 200 jobs.

The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk is one of the county's top three tourist draws, behind beaches and state parks, and employs about 1,000 workers at the height of the summer tourism season.

But the park shut down weekday operations in Sep-

tember and weekend operations Nov. 30. It closed completely Dec. 1 and won't reopen weekend operations until Dec. 26.

Tourists need a place to stay and to eat, so when they leave, so goes the need for extra help at area hotels and restaurants. The accommodations and food service sector lost 300 jobs for the month.

California lost 14,400 jobs last month, the biggest net decline in payroll employment since April, according to state figures.

The November job losses, one month after the state had the biggest net gain in employment in more than two years, were due in part to a grocery worker strike and lockout in Southern California. The state lost 11,800 grocery store jobs in November.

The overall unemployment rate statewide declined to 6.4 percent in November from a revised 6.7 percent in October. The unemployment rate a year ago was 6.8 percent.

Contact Karen A. Davis at  
[kdavis@santacruzsentinel.com](mailto:kdavis@santacruzsentinel.com).