

Local jobless rate drops to 11.5 percent

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SANTA CRUZ — Unemployment in Santa Cruz County dropped to 11.5 percent in May, the state Employment Development Department reported Friday, largely due to seasonal hiring in leisure, hospitality and agriculture.

The jobs picture was brighter than April, when unemployment was at 13.4 percent, but cloudy compared to a year ago, when it was 10.3 percent, and two years ago when it was 6.1 percent.

Statewide, 11.9 percent are unemployed compared to 9.3 percent nationwide.

State labor analyst Jorge Villalobos, who is assigned to Santa Cruz County, was on furlough Friday but the May data showed 97,700 jobs, up from 93,400 in April, but significantly down from 100,700 a year ago and 105,400 two years ago.

Agriculture added 3,600

jobs, though that number was 500 fewer than a year ago. That was evident in the smaller percentage of jobless in Watsonville, the heart of the county's ag industry, which dropped from 27 percent in April to 24 percent in May.

Job growth in leisure and hospitality was split among

food service and drinking places, up 200, accommodation, up 100, and arts, entertainment and recreation, up 100.

In the trade, transportation and utilities sector, 100 jobs were added in wholesale trade, 100 in food and beverage stores and 100 in transportation and ware-

housing.

In the government sector, federal agencies added 100 jobs.

Construction, logging and mining, a sector with 2,800 jobs, is down 500 from a year ago, Real estate, which stands at 1,300 jobs is off 100 from a year ago. During the boom two years

ago, construction was 4,800 jobs strong, and real estate provided 1,500 jobs.

Neither of those sectors saw a change from April to May.

In Santa Clara County, the jobless rate was 11 percent, down from 11.6 percent in April.

"There has been a significant amount of deferred hiring and there is a feeling of catch up as some idle companies have new hiring needs that are urgent," said Ken Winter of Scotts Valley-based Staffback, which handles corporate recruiting.

Camille Smith of Aptos, who works as a trainer and coach for senior management, advises job-hunters: Don't try to be all things to a potential employer.

"Be clear and definitive about your area of expertise and the leadership and management qualities you bring," she said. "This will help you and your next boss create the best person-to-role fit."

SEASONAL HIRING IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

INDUSTRY	JOBS	FROM APRIL	FROM 2009
Leisure and hospitality	10,900	Up 400	Down 300
Trade, trans., utilities	16,700	Up 300	Down 300
Government	22,300	Up 100	Down 900
Mining, logging, cons.	2,800	0	Down 500
Private education, health	12,700	Down 100	Down 300
Professional and business	9,100	0	Down 400
Manufacturing	5,100	0	Down 100
Other services	4,000	0	Up 300
Information	900	0	0
Financial activities	3,300	0	0
Total nonfarm	87,800	Up 700	Down 2,500
Total farm	9,900	Up 3,600	Down 500
Total	97,700	Up 4,300	Down 3,000

SOURCE: California Employment Development Department