

County jobless rate increases

SANTA CRUZ — Santa Cruz County's unemployment rate rose to 11.5 percent in November, 22 percent higher than the same month last year.

The figures mean that 11,000 workers in a 95,600 workforce are seeking jobs in the county.

The state average in November was 11.2 percent reflecting 1.3 million unemployed.

While high, the 11.5 falls below a 15.3 percent rate last February when 14,000 were out of work.

Santa Cruz County may be headed above that mark in the early months of the new year.

"I don't look for any real improvement until things start going upwards in February," said local Employment Development Director Tad Kimoto.

"Employment offers are as good as dead right now. We're getting a few jobs, but they're all in the minimum-wage area — and there are very few."

The November increase came mostly from laid-off tourist business workers and agricultural workers, Kimoto said.

While there are more unemployed, there are also more employed Santa Cruz County residents as the workforce has grown.

Today it stands at 95,600 and a year ago it was 81,000. A year before that it was 79,500.

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Across the state, the rate stayed in the double-digit figures with the lowest levels recorded in the San Francisco Bay Area and the highest at the state's southern and northern extremes.

Marin had a 6.3 rate and San Mateo a 6.6 rate for the lowest in the state.

Nearly one-third of the state's unemployed are in the Los Angeles area where 391,000 are without work. Even

with that number, the Los Angeles County rate was at 10.5 percent.

The highest levels were in hard-hit lumber counties and the agricultural belt with Imperial County at 34.9 percent, San Benito at 21.1, Sierra at 30.4 and others in the lumber counties in the 20s.

By Sentinel Staff Writer Paul Beaty with reports from The Associated Press.
