

# A Dismal Employment Picture Of County

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A recent study of employment trends in Santa Cruz County has painted a gloomy picture for the coming year.

Forecasting more of the same recessionary trend that is gripping the nation, the study indicates that unemployment will continue to climb during the year and will exert a "depressing influence" on the local economy.

The survey was prepared by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) staff and includes statistics from a private survey, national studies and local interviews with businesses.

According to the report, official employment figures for the county during November, December and January averaged 10.2 per cent.

Using information compiled from the local

employment department and projected layoff trends, the staff estimated that county unemployment rose to 20 per cent in February.

The June jobless rate — which is usually a higher employment month — is projected to reach 9.1 per cent.

This is a "substantial" increase over the corresponding rate of 7.6 per cent in 1974, according to the report.

The number of those seeking jobs during June 1975 is expected to surge to an all-time high for the month since record keeping began in 1970, the report forecasts.

In its document, the staff indicates that agricultural employment has been in a long-term decline and is expected to continue at the same rate during the coming year.

Construction employment during 1975 is expected to continue its downward slide, however,

the construction industry is expected to recover during mid-1976.

Service industries and manufacturers are expected to have mixed employment trends during the coming year, while government and trade industries are expected to experience the only growth in hiring during the coming year.

Government employment is expected to make the largest gain with 1,000 people added to the payroll since June of 1974.

A survey of local firms has shown that hiring is expected to remain at a minimum during the next year.

Larger firms are expecting "minimal" hiring during the next six months. Small firms are generally calling for no new hiring and many have begun laying off employes, said the report.

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Local employment agencies report a stampede of job seekers.

Job orders and placements in these agencies are up 15 per cent. The reason is that when employment gets tight, many agencies prefer to have a private job organization screen the large number of applicants that apply for a limited number of positions, said the report.

It is estimated that currently there are 3,200 "hardcore" unemployed in the county who need training in order to get a job.

Local employers, however, have said there is a definite skill shortage in such positions as specialized clerical work for doctors and dentists, bookkeeping, skilled service trades such as general auto repair and sheet metal production, keypunch operators and bilingual early childhood education positions.

Just who is unemployed and why they are out of work was also investigated by the CETA staff.

In a sampling of 450 unemployed in the county, the staff found that the majority of those out of work had attended college, were 20 to 30 years old, single, white and had been laid off from their last job.

According to the survey 37 per cent of the labor force in Santa Cruz are women. The state average is 42 per cent.

The study also showed a "surprisingly low" number of unemployed Mexican-Americans.

The survey also questioned the unemployed on their reasons for being out of a job.

The majority said it was because there were no jobs to be found, however, a large number added that they lacked proper training to get a job.

Others with special problems — such as being handicapped, having a criminal record, language difficulties and the young — also said they encountered many employment problems.

Veterans are also experiencing employment problems, according to the survey.

A highlight to the rather bleak picture was given by Personnel Director Dick Jamison, however.

According to recent announcement, the county is expected to get more than \$6 million in federal aid to train and employ local unemployed.