

Local jobless rate hits 11.2 percent

Unemployment
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SANTA CRUZ — Unemployment here and across the state was worse last year than originally thought, according to just released annual figures from the state Employment Development Department.

Continued seasonal layoffs in agriculture-related and general merchandise sectors pushed Santa Cruz County's unemployment rate to 11.2 percent in January — up from a revised 9.8 percent in December — leaving 15,900 jobless out of the county's 142,200 workers.

That decline was greater than 10.7 percent last year.

Before the revision, December's unemployment rate was 9.1 percent. That gap of .7 percent was the most marked change for any month in 2002 after revised data was made available.

The department's initial 2002 numbers were based on monthly unemployment estimates.

"Once we received annual tax data from actual payrolls, we went back and redid the numbers — which then reflected actual data," said Janice Shriver, a labor market analyst.

In a weak economy, it is tough for state data collectors to keep up with the layoffs, said Ted Gibson, a Sacramento consultant who used to be the state's top economist.

The annual unemployment average in Santa Cruz County for 2002 was 8 percent, compared with 6.7 percent statewide and 5.8 percent nationally.

The county's farm jobs decreased from 7,700 in November to 4,600 in December and 3,900 in January. Next hardest hit was the service sector, with 300 jobs lost between December and January for a 17.6 percent decline.

The county experienced job increases from December to January in the government information and professional and business services sectors. For example, a 4.3 percent increase in information jobs was noted. That includes Internet service providers and software companies. The financial sector remained stable with 3,700 jobs.

Also, the leisure and hospitality industry noted a marked job increase of 18.2 percent in the area

Jobless rate

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

January 2003: 11.2 percent.

December 2002: 9.8 percent, up from originally reported 9.1.

November 2002: 8.5 percent, up from 8.

October 2002: 6.5 percent, up from 6.1.

September 2002: 6.2 percent, up from 5.7.

August 2002: 5.9 percent, up from 5.5.

July 2002: 6.4 percent, up from 6.

June 2002: 6.5 percent, up from 6.

May 2002: 6.5 percent, up from 6.2.

April 2002: 8.9 percent, up from 8.6.

March 2002: 10 percent, up from 9.6.

February 2002: 10.5 percent, up from 9.9.

January 2002: 10.7 percent, up from 10.4.

2002 Annual Unemployment Average: 8 percent

Source: Employment Development Department, 2003

of arts, entertainment and recreation. That is an increase of 200 jobs to 1,300 in January. Shriver attributed those increases to seasonal holiday hires.

California's jobless rate was higher than originally reported through much of last year, particularly in the San Francisco Bay area.

State unemployment in December reached 6.9 percent — the highest mark since November 1996. The initial report put the rate at 6.6 percent.

Since the end of 2000, the San Jose area has lost 149,200 jobs, 54 percent more than previously reported. The neighboring San Francisco area lost 92,900 jobs in the same period, 150 percent more than earlier estimates.

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