

NOT MUCH RECOVERY

Unemployment rate jumps to 12.5 percent

Seasonal drop in ag jobs
trumps boost in retail hiring

By JONDI GUMZ

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SANTA CRUZ — Santa brought Santa Cruz County 200 retail jobs in November, but agriculture shed 2,500 jobs, boosting the unemployment rate to 12.5 percent, up from 10.6 percent in October.

The jobless rate a year ago was 11.6 percent.

The state Employment Development Department posted the figures Friday, one day after Congress agreed to renew jobless benefits for 2 million people out of work nationwide.

The jobless rate nationwide was 9.8 percent in November compared to 12.4 percent for California and 10.6 percent in Santa Clara County, home to the Silicon Valley.

In November 2008, before the recession hit, Santa Cruz County had 105,900 jobs. Now that number is down to 94,900.

State analyst Jorge Villalobos said Santa Cruz County's drop of 2,500 farm jobs, typical for this time of year, was actually smaller than the 20-year average of 2,600.

"Ag has been somewhat buffered from the econ-

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omy," said Jess Brown of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau. "The consumer has cut back on restaurants but not on eating."

However, Monterey County lost 6,700 agriculture jobs, compared to a normal decline of 5,700.

Leisure and hospitality jobs dipped 100, compared to a typical decline of 300. The drop was smaller than usual because food service and drinking places added 100 jobs.

General merchandise stores and other retailers added 100 jobs each for a gain of 200.

Discount retailer Marshall's hired 60 people for the new store on Commercial Way that opened in late October. Burlington Coat Factory and Toys R Us opened temporary stores at the Capitola Mall, each hiring about 13 employees, and others added seasonal employees for the shopping season.

But jobs in retail are down 400 compared to a year ago.

Other sectors that haven't rebounded to levels of a year ago: construction, down 500 jobs; hospitality, down 500 jobs; and professional and business services,

JOB IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

INDUSTRY	JOB 11/10	CHANGE FROM 10/10	20-YEAR AVERAGE	CHANGE FROM 11/09
Government	21,800	Up 400	Up 200	Down 400
Trade, transportation, utilities	16,200	Up 200	Up 200	Down 800
Private education, health	12,700	0	Up 100	0
Professional and business	9,100	0	Down 100	Down 300
Manufacturing	5,100	0	Down 100	Down 100
Mining, logging, construction	2,700	0	Down 100	Down 500
Information	900	0	0	0
Financial activities	3,300	0	0	0
Leisure and hospitality	10,500	Down 100	Down 300	Down 500
Other services	3,900	Down 100	0	0
Total Nonfarm	86,200	Up 400	Down 100	Down 2,600
Total Farm	8,700	Down 2,500	Down 2,600	Down 1,100
Total	94,900	Down 2,100	Down 2,700	Down 3,700

SOURCE: California Employment Development Department

down 300.

"There's not a lot of positives," said Villalobos, comparing this year to last year.

Bill Tysseling of the Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce said the year-over-year unemployment is "worrisome but also not much of a surprise. We've known that construction, retail and leisure have been hit hard by the recession."

Though retail and leisure are showing

signs of a turnaround, "employers are understandably cautious about adding new workers and increasing wages," he added. "The theme of most conversations at chamber meetings and events is the need to stay strong for another couple of years in the face of unacceptably high unemployment rates."

He sees improved prospects for export and preference for re-use as trends that present opportunities for local businesses.