

# County jobless rate falls

*Unemployment*  
Farming boosts local payrolls; manufacturing weak

By **MIKE DE GIVE**

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SANTA CRUZ — The county's unemployment rate dipped in February, but was higher still than it's been in three years, according to preliminary data from the state.

The biggest boost in jobs came from farming, which is typical for this time of year.

The biggest loss compared to February 2001 was in manufacturing, where the county lost 1,200 jobs. Some of those include Salz Leathers and Texas Instruments in Santa Cruz, and Almira Med-

ical in Scotts Valley, all which closed.

Employment Development Department figures show that 14,100 local residents, or 9.8 percent of the work force, were out of work in February. That's 600 fewer unemployed people than was recorded in January, when the rate was 10.4 percent.

Last February, the local unemployment rate was 8.2 percent.

One sector of the economy that's growing jobs is state and local government, where there are 800 more jobs than there were a year ago. Five hundred jobs were created under the head-

ing "local government" while the other 300 were picked up in "state education." No further breakdown was available.

The state's preliminary unemployment rate for February is 6.4 percent. The nation's preliminary rate was 6.1 percent.

Santa Clara County rate for February was 7.3 percent, down from 7.4 percent in January but 1.8 percent higher than a year ago.

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*3-20-02*  
**Extended benefits**

Some workers who have exhausted their regular unemployment benefits since March 15, 2001, are eligible for extended benefits through Dec. 31. The weekly benefit is the same as what was received under the original claim.

To see if you qualify for extended unemployment benefits, or to apply, look for the link under "News" and the Employment Development Department Web site, [www.edd.ca.gov](http://www.edd.ca.gov), or call (800) 300-5616.

The Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act of 2002 was signed into law March 9, 2002.