



CALIFORNIA UNEMPLOYMENT SKYROCKETS TO 9.3%

California's unemployment rate skyrocketed to 9.3% in December. The jobless rate announced today by the state Employment Development Department represents a 0.9 point jump from 8.4% in November. Excluding farmworkers, California lost 78,200 jobs in December. California's unemployment rate hasn't been this bad since January 1994, when the state was coming out of its recession. The national unemployment rate hit 7.2% in December. About 1.7 million Californians were looking for work last month; up by 166,000 since November and 653,000 since 2007. Some 785,200 were laid off, while 125,300 chose to leave their job. The rest were either temporarily employed or new job seekers. The construction sector accounted for the most job cuts over the past year; 92,600 positions, a 10.8% drop. Labor leaders say the skyrocketing job losses should persuade Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and state lawmakers to expand the state's unemployment insurance system and provide benefits to seasonal and new workers. That would make California eligible for an additional \$900 million as part of a federal economic stimulus bill Congress is considering.

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