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## VIRGINIA EMPLOYMENT DOWN SLIGHTLY

Virginia has posted its first-ever year-over-year negative job growth. The Virginia Employment Commission says statewide employment in December was 3.8 million, down 0.8% from the same month in 2007. Job growth even stalled in Northern Virginia, the Commonwealth's strongest-performing region. The Commission says there were 1.324 million non-agricultural jobs in Northern Virginia in December, down 0.1% from a year earlier. The negative job growth in Northern Virginia was largely the result of a poor holiday season, which meant fewer new jobs in industries like hospitality and retail. Metropolitan Washington's unemployment rate, at 4.7% in December, was still the second-lowest among the nation's 49 largest metropolitan areas. Statewide, Virginia's unemployment rate rose to 5.4% in December, compared to a 7.2% unemployment rate nationally.

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