

## DISMAL YAKIMA COUNTY JOBLESS NUMBERS



The employment outlook in Yakima County continues to look dim as the unemployment continues to climb and there are fewer and fewer nonagricultural jobs available. In September, the unemployment rate for Yakima County was 8.5 percent, which was an improvement from August's number of 9.8 percent. The major difference is that compared to September of 2010, the rate is a huge spike from 7.4 percent. These figures were released by the state Employment Security Department. Yakima County's labor force, which sat at 130,510 in September, dropped 4.1 percent from the same time last year. "It's more bad news than good news," said Don Meseck, regional economist for state Employment Security. Meseck explained the reason for the drop-off in the labor force, attributing it to job seekers who are no longer searching because there is a lack of prospects. Meseck gave another explanation, the fact that baby boomers are retiring early because their organizations are downsizing. The rate for Washington state, which has not been seasonally adjusted, sat at 8.5 percent in the month of September. That number is the same as Yakima County's number but the rate for the state was a drop from 8.9 percent compared to the same month one year ago. When the state rate was adjusted for seasonal employment, such as holiday hires, the rate was 9.1 percent. That rate was a drop from the 9.4 percent seen in September of 2010. The county of Yakima does not report seasonal rates to the public. Compared to September of 2010, the county lost 1,700 jobs in the month, which translates to a 2.2 percent from the previous year. Meseck explains that the state has had positive job growth for the previous 12 months, while Yakima County continues to struggle with employment, which makes for some troubling times. The state of Washington witnessed a job growth rate of 1 percent in September. There was a loss of 1,100 government jobs in Yakima County compared to last year in the month of September. There were 400 jobs lost in both the construction and manufacturing industries. Wholesale trade lost 300 jobs over one year, which was caused by the cold weather that prevents the harvest of crops. The wholesale trade industry includes fruit packing houses in the county. There were 600 jobs filled in leisure and hospitality; 400 jobs filled in transportation, warehousing and utilities; 100 jobs filled in retail trade, professional and business services and health services in the month of September. Compared to September of 2010, agricultural jobs in Yakima and Klickitat counties filled 1,750 jobs, which is a 5 percent increase. Meseck said that despite those gains, the declines could not be overtaken in the data. Benton County saw increased unemployment rates while the rates declined in Kittitas and Klickitat counties. The rates in Benton, Kittitas, and Klickitat counties were 6.9 percent, 7.5 percent, and 7.9 percent.