

EMPLOYMENT IN SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY IMPROVES



The county of San Joaquin's job market showed a bit of strength in the month of November, which is seen as a bit unusual for the area of late. The unemployment rate of the county has held steady at 15.5 percent, which is the same as the revised number from the month of October. The number is also below the jobless rate of 17.8 percent in November of 2010, according to Recordnet.com. A survey was conducted of payrolls operating in San Joaquin County, which found 206,000 jobs in the county, up by 4,900 jobs, which is good for 2.5 percent for the previous 12 months. Jeff Michael is the director of the Business Forecasting Center at the University of the Pacific. Michael had the following to say: "I haven't been completely downbeat on the local economy, but this has certainly surprised me on the upside," he said. "It's generally a positive report." Michael notes the fall harvest and food-processing activities ending as a reason for the unemployment to rise in November for San Joaquin County. For November of 2010, the jobless rate increased to 17.8 percent, up from 16.6 percent in October of 2010. "We're not seeing the usual seasonal spike in the unemployment rate," he said. "It somewhat parallels the California unemployment data. The 11.3 percent rate in California is somewhat surprising as well." From month to month, the county did witness a drop in agricultural employment, with farmers laying off close to 2,900 employees, which is seen as a normal trend for the season. Nati Martinez is a labor market analyst for EDD and he says that the numbers were offset by a one month gain of 900 jobs in the retail industry. This number can be traced to temporary hiring for the holiday season, along with 700 new jobs in public schools. "That's definitely a normal seasonal increase," Martinez said of the retail hiring. Martinez also said that the school industry in the area has seen an average increase of 400 jobs from October to November in the past ten years. There were 900 jobs added in the trade, transportation, and utilities industries during the time period of the survey. There was an 800 employee gain in the manufacturing industry, the majority of them in nondurable goods, while local governments added 600 jobs. "You're certainly looking at a lot of positive changes when you look at the year over," Martinez said. In the private education services industry, there was a loss of 800 jobs, one of the weak points of the report for the county. "We've been skidding across the bottom for almost two years," Michael said. "At what point are you high enough off the bottom to feel you're not going to hit it again? I think we're getting close to it." The unemployment rate for San Joaquin County has not been adjusted for seasonal hiring trends. The numbers do line up with the unadjusted rate for California, which is 10.9 percent, and 8.2 percent for the country in November.

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