

NORTHERN VIRGINIA STAYING EMPLOYED



The unemployment rate for Virginia is 6.4 percent, but in the state's northern half, that figure is inverted to 4.6 percent, and even lower for Arlington County, which is at 3.7 percent. This does not surprise many who know the state well. In the northern half, the work force is highly educated and has minimal retail and construction related employment. It also does not hurt job stability to be in the backyard of the nation's capital. "The government, the professional and business services, health care and higher education, that puts the floor under employment in Northern Virginia," Said William Mezger. Mezger is the chief economist of the Virginia Employment Commission. Though these numbers are strong, the unemployment rate in the area has been growing. The current 4.6 percent rate is up from 3.8 percent in December and in January of 2008, data shows the area having a 2.8 percent jobless rate. Though the hardest hit sectors of the American job market are not represented in large numbers by the workers of Northern Virginia, all of the industries of the region did shed jobs within the first month of the year. Also, the number of individuals in the state collecting unemployment checks skyrocketed, going from approximately 56,000 in December of 2008 to 90,000 in January of 2009. The decline or closure of many major employment centers left far more people in bleak situations across Virginia's rural areas than in the Washington suburbs that found in the north. Over 20 jurisdictions, mostly along Virginia's southern border, have double-digit unemployment rates, with Danville being the worst in the commonwealth with 14 percent. The commission expects the jobless rate to "remain high", until lowering slightly in the spring. They do not think that the federal stimulus package will show any effect for at least several months. Keep track of all the latest employment news at: <http://www.employmentcrossing.com>