

Tri-county jobless rates decrease

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

All three counties in Central Oregon saw their unemployment rates drop from March to April. Only Crook County saw its rate drop more than expected. Deschutes County had the lowest rate at 4.6 percent, while Jefferson County had the highest at 6.8 percent.

Crook County: The county's unemployment rate declined to 6.1 percent in April, down 1.3 percentage points from March. The decline was more than expected for the month, and the rate was even with year-ago levels. The county's civilian labor force has grown slightly over the year with about 81 more people employed and 12 more unemployed.

The county added 110 jobs in April, its second month of positive job gain since last fall. The monthly gain was at normal levels and jobs should continue to be added through June until the summer break in education leads to jobs declines. The largest gains were experienced in leisure and hospitality (50). This industry has added 70 jobs since January, and typically adds jobs through the busy tourism season of July and August. Other industries gaining jobs in April included: construction(10), wholesale (10) and retail (10) trade, financial activities (10), and federal (10) and local (10) governments.

There were a small number of industries that lost jobs in April. The largest was wood product manufacturing (â€20). This industry has remained relatively flat in Crook County during the first four months of this year with between 1,020 and 1,040 workers. The other industry to shed jobs was educational and health services

(â€‘10).

The countyâ€™s year-over-year employment growth remained slightly positive in April. The county added only 10 jobs over the year. Industries showing gains include leisure and hospitality (13.0%), financial activities (11.5%), professional and business services (8.8%) and retail trade (5.5%). However, declines occurred in wood product manufacturing (â€‘12.1%), state government (â€‘9.5%), and federal government (â€‘1.6%).

Deschutes County (Bend MSA): The countyâ€™s unemployment rate dropped in April to 4.6 percent, and is still the fourth lowest local unemployment rate among Oregonâ€™s 36 counties. The drop was on par with what was expected for the month. The rate was even with its level of last year, which was the lowest rate for the month on record. The countyâ€™s civilian labor force grew by about 4.0 percent over the year.

The county added jobs in April at a slightly slower-than-normal pace. The gain of 980 jobs was the third month in a row to add jobs, but was the first time since last June that the gain was below expected levels. Since February the county has added 2,280 jobs, gaining back much of what was lost during the fall and winter.

The county's largest job gains during the month occurred in the industries that normally see strong growth during the spring. They include natural resources, mining and construction (310), retail trade (140), professional and business services (360) and leisure and hospitality (260). Natural resources, mining and construction has gained about 540 jobs between February and April of this year, as compared to about 760 jobs during the same time period last year.

Portions of government and manufacturing were the only industries to shed jobs in April. Manufacturing dropped 150 jobs in durable goods, while overall manufacturing lost 180 jobs. Manufacturing is down 270 jobs from the start of the year. Government shed jobs at both the state ('20) and local ('80) levels.

The area continued to see strong over-the-year growth " 3.8 percent this April. Expansion continued, stimulated by educational and health services (6.9%), accommodations and food services (6.9%), natural resources, mining and construction (6.4%) and professional and business services (5.9%). Manufacturing ('6.6%) and federal government ('1.2%) were the only industries to show weakness.

Jefferson County: The county's 6.8 percent April unemployment rate was 1.1 percentage points below March's rate. This was a smaller-than-normal decline for April. The county's rate is still above year-ago levels, and similar to what it was in April of 2002 and 2003.

Jefferson County's employment grew by 80 jobs in April, a stronger than expected gain for the month. April typically adds about 60 jobs. However the county continues to feel the affects of a slow down in manufacturing, which shed 20 jobs in April. The decline in manufacturing is expected to continue for a few more months, as the final boats came off the Seaswirl production line at the end of April. Wood products manufacturing has shed 180 jobs since January. Transportation, warehousing and utilities (â€‘10) was the only other industry to lose jobs in April.

Industry gains were widespread during the month. Gains were seen in Indian tribal (30), with smaller gains in leisure and hospitality (20), professional and business services (10) and retail trade (10). Leisure and hospitality has added 60 jobs since January and is expected to continue to add jobs through July.

The drop in manufacturing continued to hold the county's year-over-year employment in negative territory. Employment in April was down 1.5 percent from last April. Contributing to this decline were manufacturing (â€‘16.4%), federal government (â€‘6.3%) and educational and health services (â€‘5.0%). Gains were seen in professional and business services (20.0%), construction (16.7%) and retail trade (12.5%).

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