Central Oregon jobless rate declines again

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

All three counties in Central Oregon saw their unemployment rates drop from April to May. Both Crook and Deschutes County saw their rates drop more than expected. Deschutes County had the lowest rate at 4.1 percent, while Jefferson County had the highest at 6.2 percent.

Crook County: The countyâ€™s unemployment rate declined to 5.3 percent in May, down 0.8 percentage point from April. The decline was more than expected for the month, and the rate was even with year-ago levels. The countyâ€™s civilian labor force has only grown slightly over the year with about 74 more people employed and 4 more unemployed.

The county added 180 jobs in May, its third month of positive job gain this spring. The monthly gain was above normal levels, as employment change has been fairly normal all year. The largest gains were experienced in leisure and hospitality (30) and federal government (30). Leisure and hospitality has added 100 jobs since the beginning of the year and typically peaks in July and August. Federal government, which has grown 50 jobs in the past three months, typically adds seasonal workers heading into the summer as it increases projects on public lands from wildfire suppression to recreational facility management.

Other gains occurred in wholesale trade (20), educational and health services (20) and local government (20). The countyâ€™s manufacturers grew by 10 employees in May after shedding 10 employees in April. This industry is up 20 jobs since the start of the year. There were no industries that lost jobs in May.

The countyâ€™s year-over-year employment growth remained slightly positive in May. The county added only 30 jobs over the year. Industries showing gains include professional and business services (8.6%), leisure and hospitality (8.5%), financial activities (7.7%), and educational and health services (6.2%). However, declines occurred in wood product manufacturing (â€‘10.4%), state government (â€‘9.5%), and wholesale trade (â€‘1.1%).

Deschutes County (Bend MSA): The countyâ€™s unemployment rate dropped in May to 4.1 percent down a half point from April, and is the fifth lowest local unemployment rate among Oregonâ€™s 36 counties. The drop was more than what was expected for the month. The rate was slightly below its level of last year, and is lowest rate for the month since 1969. The countyâ€™s civilian labor force grew by about 3.3 percent over the year.

The county added jobs in May at a quicker-than-normal pace. The gain of 1,240 jobs was the fourth month in a row to add jobs, and was possibly stronger because April added fewer jobs than expected. Since February the county added 3,210 jobs, gaining back more than it lost during the fall and winter.

The countyâ€™s largest job gains during the month occurred in the industries that normally see strong growth during the spring. They include leisure and hospitality (290), professional and business services (240), and natural resources, mining and construction (220). Leisure and hospitality gained about 500 jobs between March and May of this year, as compared to about 650 jobs during the same time period last year.

Government added jobs at each level in May, with the largest gains in local government (110). Government typically adds jobs until July, when summer vacation causes temporary jobs declines. No industries lost jobs over the month in the county. Manufacturing added 60 jobs in May after dropping by 280 jobs between January and April.

The area continued to see strong over-the-year growth â€“ 3.2 percent this May. Expansion continued, stimulated by educational and health services (7.1%), wholesale trade (5.4%), natural resources, mining and construction (5.1%), and professional and business services (5.1%). Manufacturing (â€‘6.3%) and state government (â€‘1.7%) were the only industries to show weakness.

Jefferson County: The countyâ€™s 6.2 percent May unemployment rate was 0.6 percentage point below Aprilâ€™s rate. This was a smaller-than-normal decline for May. The countyâ€™s rate is still above year-ago levels, and similar to what it was in May of 2003 and 2002. The countyâ€™s civilian labor force has dropped by 14 persons since last year.

Jefferson County lost 10 jobs in May. The decline in May is the result of a loss of 140 jobs in manufacturing. This was the only industry in the county to lose jobs during the month, the result of Seaswirl shifting production of boats to the Midwest. Typically the county adds about 130 jobs during May, and aside from the loss in manufacturing the countyâ€™s remaining industries added 130 jobs.

The largest gains were seen in leisure and hospitality (40). This industry has added 100 jobs since the beginning of the year. Natural resources and mining and state and local government each added 20 jobs in May. Smaller gains were seen in educational and health services (10) and retail trade (10). Retail trade has added 10 jobs in each of the past three months and will likely add jobs through the summer.

The drop in manufacturing continued to hold the countyâ€™s year-over-year employment in negative territory. Employment in April was down 3.2 percent from last May. Contributing to this decline were losses in manufacturing (â€‘25.0%), federal government (â€‘6.3%), and wholesale trade (â€‘5.3%). Gains were seen in construction (16.7%), professional and business services (14.3%), and retail trade (10.3%).