

Central Oregon unemployment situation improves

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

All three of the counties in Central Oregon saw their unemployment rates decrease from August to September. Only Jefferson County saw its rate decrease more than expected. Deschutes County had the lowest rate at 4.4 percent, while Jefferson County had the highest at 5.7 percent.

Crook County: The county's unemployment rate dropped to 5.5 percent in September, down 0.3 percentage point from August. The decrease was less than what was expected for the month, but the rate is at its lowest level since May. The rate is still higher than the historical lows of last year. The county's civilian labor force declined between August and September, as August typically sees the highest levels of agricultural employment for the year. An estimate of agricultural employment is a key input in the civilian labor force estimate.

The county added only 20 jobs in September, after shedding 100 jobs in the previous two months. The gains in September were about 70 jobs lower than expected. Typically the county adds more jobs coming out of the summer break in education, while industries associated with summer tourism slowly disappear.

Typically September sees an increase in jobs related to education after the summer break, and this is where most of the gains this September occurred. Local government saw the largest gains with 120 more jobs. This is where employment in K-12 public education is counted, and a gain of 20 jobs was seen in private educational and health services. Elsewhere both retail trade and other services added 10 jobs.

But the private sector of the economy lost a total of 70 jobs in September, some of the loss was associated with a slow down in the tourism industry as leisure and hospitality lost 20 jobs. Manufacturing shed 30 jobs, its second straight month of job declines. The wood products portion of manufacturing lost 40 jobs in September. That was the industry's first job decline since April. Elsewhere wholesale trade, professional and business services and federal government each lost 20 jobs.

The county's year-over-year employment growth continued to be positive in September. The county added 50 jobs over the year. Industries showing gains include financial activities (7.4%), leisure and hospitality (6.6%), educational and health services (4.5%) and retail trade (3.4%). However, declines occurred in federal government (-2.8%), manufacturing (-2.4%) and wholesale trade (-1.1%).

Deschutes County (Bend MSA): The county's unemployment rate declined slightly to 4.4 percent in September, down from 4.6 in August. This was a typical move for the rate during September, and it currently stands about a half point higher than the historical lows of last September. The county had the tenth lowest local unemployment rate among Oregon's 36 counties.

September saw job declines for the first time since January, and September is typically the first of three months to see job losses until the holiday gains of December. The declines this September were larger than expected as 750 jobs were lost. Normally the county only declines by about 400 in September as seasonal jobs disappear along with the tourists.

The county's largest job declines in September occurred in leisure and hospitality (-590) as the industry adjusts staffing levels for the last month of summer. Other industries to shed a large number of jobs include professional and business services (-300) and financial activities (-210). Seasonal declines were also seen in natural resources, mining and construction (-90) and federal government (-40). Manufacturing dropped 30 jobs in September after gaining 230 jobs between May and August.

Meanwhile the largest gains in September were seen in local education (400), where public K-12 and community college employment is counted. Also 90 jobs were added in private educational and health services. These industries are expected to continue to add jobs in the coming months as staffing levels slowly increase at the start of a new school year.

The area continued to see over-the-year growth at 2.5 percent this September. Expansion continued, stimulated by retail trade (5.9%), educational and health services (5.8%), professional and business services (3.4%) and natural resources, mining and construction (3.3%). Manufacturing (-2.5%), local government (-2.2%) and federal government (-2.2%) showed weakness.

Jefferson County: The county's 5.7 percent September unemployment rate was lower than its August rate of 6.0 percent. This was a slightly larger drop than expected for the month, but the rate is still a full point above year-ago levels. The county's civilian labor force declined in September as agricultural employment usually peaks in August.

Jefferson County added 80 jobs in September at a time of year when job declines are normal. Normally the county shed about 100 jobs during the waning days of summer, but gains made in state government outweighed those declines this September.

State government added 100 jobs in September as the Deer Ridge Correctional Facility began accepting its first inmates. Jobs were also added in local government (30) as the new school year began and in federal government (10). In the private sector only natural resources and mining (10) added jobs.

The rest of the private sector saw small job declines during the final month of summer. The largest declines occurred in leisure and hospitality (â€‘30) and wood products manufacturing (â€‘20). This was the first job decline in wood products since April. Elsewhere 10 jobs were lost in retail trade and professional and business services.

Even with gains in state government the recent drop in manufacturing continued to hold the countyâ€™s year-over-year employment in negative territory. Employment this September was down 0.5 percent from last September. Losses in manufacturing (â€‘21.7%) and wholesale trade (â€‘10.5%) were the only contributors to the decline. Gains were seen in state government (68.8%), construction (7.7%), financial activities (5.6%), leisure and hospitality (5.4%) and professional and business services (4.5%).

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