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California job losses continue to climb

Job losses for September are higher than expected and almost six times greater than in August, state officials say. L.A. County joblessness soars to 12.7%.

By Alana Semuels

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California posted higher-than-expected job losses in September, a sign that the state's employment woes continue even amid indications of a broader economic recovery.

Employers cut 39,300 workers from their payrolls last month, according to figures released this morning by the state Employment Development Department. That's nearly six times the number of jobs the state now says were lost in August, led by cuts in construction and government.

A separate survey of joblessness showed that California's unemployment rate was 12.2% in September, down from a revised 12.3% in August. The unemployment rate in September 2008 was 7.8%.

"It is discouraging," said Esmael Adibi, an economist at Chapman University. "We want to see job losses go down and the pace slow down, but we didn't see it."

California's unemployment rate is well above the national rate of 9.8%.

The state's job losses were especially pronounced in construction, which lost 14,100 jobs over the month, and government, which lost 12,700.

Cutbacks in government employment, which includes public schools, are partly to blame for



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the state's lackluster performance this month, said Stephen Levy of the Center for the Continuing Study of the California Economy.

"We are disproportionately hit in the government sector because our state and local governments are having worse budget shortfalls than in other states," he said.

Los Angeles County's unemployment rate soared to 12.7%, up from 12.2% the previous month. The county has lost 164,200 jobs over the last year.

Unemployment rates in the other four counties in Southern California all declined in August. Orange County's jobless rate was 9.4% in September, down from a revised 9.8% in August. Hard-hit Riverside and San Bernardino counties posted an unemployment rate of 14.2%, down from 14.6% in August.

Ventura County's unemployment rate was 11%, down from a revised 11.3% in August. San Diego's unemployment rate dipped to 10.2% in September from 10.6% in August.

Imperial County continued to have the highest rate in the state, and one of the highest in the country, in September at 30.1%. Others were Merced County at 15.7%, Trinity County at 15.9%, and Yuba County at 17.8%.

The state has lost 732,700 jobs over the last year, with 144,000 of those losses occurring in construction. California's construction sector has shed more than 300,000 jobs since its pre-recession peak in early 2006.

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