
Jobless rate down from July 2009

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The Longview area's unemployment rate was 7.8 percent in July and continues to fare better than state and national jobless numbers.

The rate was down from the 8.5 percent unemployment rate of July 2009 and was even with June's 7.8 percent. In figures released Friday by the Texas Workforce Commission, the three-county Longview metro area had about 8,700 people registered as being out of work. That is down by 700 people from the 9,400 people unemployed a year ago.

The Texas Workforce Commission tallied 102,500 people as being employed in non-agricultural jobs in July, up by 800 jobs from the 101,700 people on Longview area payrolls in July 2009.

Amanda Nobles, executive director of Kilgore Economic Development Corp., said the improvement in jobless numbers jives with what she has seen and heard from local businesses.

"Some of Kilgore's employers have told us that they are hiring additional workers or bringing back workers who were formerly laid off," she said. "The highest numbers of new job openings are in the oil and gas sector."

Nobles also said some manufacturing companies in stable sectors of the economy have been adding some workers.

"The decrease in the unemployment rate from a year ago, although small, still represents more jobs available for our citizens, which is a positive indicator for East Texas as opposed to many other parts of the U.S. and some parts of Texas," Nobles said. She said part of the boost in employment can be attributed to federal jobs tied to the 2010 Census.

She said the region has been fortunate in not having had more plant closures.

"Recently, some of our regional employers have indicated their expectations for future growth and additional jobs for this area," Nobles said. "This is good news for Kilgore, Longview and all of East Texas." Statewide, the seasonally unadjusted July unemployment rate stood at 8.5 percent, while nationally about 9.7 percent of workers were off the job, officials said. Texas employers have added 168,900 jobs since January, officials reported, according to Tom Pauken, Texas Workforce Commission chairman.

"Private sector employers in Texas continued adding jobs in July, a trend we've seen since the first of the year," Pauken said. The professional and business services industry recorded its largest monthly job gain in more than a decade with 12,600 positions added in July.

Mining and logging employment grew by 4,600 jobs statewide in July and has added jobs for six consecutive months. The construction and manufacturing industries each added 4,300 jobs in July.

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