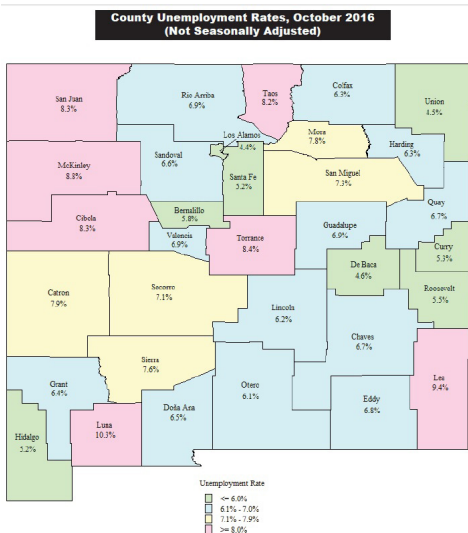


McKinley's, Cibola's unemployment rates plunge

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Wednesday, 23 November 2016 12:57



Holiday hiring picking up, slowly

New Mexico's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 6.7 percent in October 2016, unchanged from September, but up from 6.5 percent a year ago, according to information from the state Department of Work Force Solutions.

In McKinley County, the unemployment rate was 8.8 percent for October. That figure was down from a 9.2 percent unemployment rate in September. Likewise, the unemployment rate in neighboring Cibola County, about a 55-minute drive for Gallup, was 8.3 percent in October and 8.4 percent in September.

Unemployment statistics are a month behind due to the amount of time it takes to compile them.

Seasonal hiring

"What you see in these two counties reflects, to some extent, what is happening around the

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state,” Tracy Shaleen, an economist with Work Force, said. “This is in large part due to retailers hiring seasonal help for the holidays.”

Bill Lee, executive director at the Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce, said the holiday period in Gallup and McKinley County is typically a busy one — hence the hiring of temporary seasonal help.

“Obviously, Rio West Mall is one place where you see the example of retailers increasing the number of employees that they need to work,” Lee said. “But it’s not only the mall, it’s the dollar stores and just retailers generally, particularly during this time of year.”

Jasmine Pino of Gallup said she just got hired at a newly-opened Family Dollar on the east side of Gallup. Family Dollar recently opened two stores; the other is on the city’s west side. Pino said she doesn’t know how long the retailer will employ her, but said she’ll work long hours no matter if it’s temporary or permanent.

“I’m just happy to be working,” Pino, 35, said. “I appreciate the fact that they hired me.”

Hiring in education and health services, the state’s largest growing private sector industries, was up by 6,200 jobs or 4.6 percent, down from last month’s revised increase of 6,700 jobs, Shaleen noted.

Unemployment still running high

New Mexico’s unemployment rate represents the second-highest in the United States. Alaska has a higher unemployment rate at 6.8 percent, statistics show. October 2016 represents the third month that New Mexico has had the second-highest unemployment rate next to Alaska.

The national unemployment rate was 4.9 percent for October, down from 5 percent in both September 2016 and October 2015. There are 33 counties in New Mexico.

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Among the largest employers in McKinley and Cibola counties are the school districts and two hospitals. There is no retail mall in Grants as in Gallup.

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