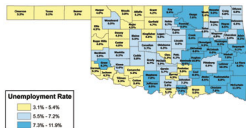


By ROBERT PIERCE

• Daily Leader

Two Oklahoma Panhandle counties had the lowest unemployment rate in the state for January, according to a report from the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission.

Beaver County had the state's lowest rate at 3.1 percent, followed closely by Cimarron at 3.2 percent, and the report said 73 of Oklahoma's 77 counties experienced a decrease in unemployment from December to January. Texas County's rate was slightly higher than those at 5.1 percent.



Overall, the Sooner State's unemployment rate dropped to 6.7 percent in January, compared to the 6.8 mark for December. That number was far below the national figure of 9.7 percent for January. Oklahoma, along with Kansas, was among eight states reporting a decline in unemployment.

According to the OESC, just more than 100,000 of Oklahoma's labor force of 1.77 million were unemployed in January, while 14.8 million of the nation's force of 153 million filed claims.

The commission's labor report showed Oklahoma's seasonally adjusted labor force and employment both expanded over the month, while seasonally adjusted unemployment reported a drop nationwide.

From January 2009 to January 2010, statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment grew by 31,410 people, a change of 35.5 percent.

Seasonally adjusted Oklahoma non-farm employment shed 1,400 jobs over the month of January. During the same period, the U.S.'s seasonally adjusted non-farm employment contracted by 26,000 jobs. Both were drops of one-tenth of 1 percent.

Between January 2009 and January 2010, state non-farm employment dropped by 59,900 jobs, a decrease of 3.8 percent.

Other trends, according to the OESC's report, included:

- o Six of the 10 supersectors reported over the month gains in January, led by trade, transportation and utilities (1,000 jobs), where growth was provided by the retail trade sector;
- o Other services (a loss of 2,000 jobs) posted the largest job loss for the month in January 2010;
- o The only two supersectors to add jobs for the January-to-January period were educational and health services (5,100 jobs) and government (4,300 jobs); and
- o Four supersectors reported over-the-year losses in excess of 10,000 jobs in January, including manufacturing (19,400 jobs) and trade, transportation and utilities (12,100 jobs).