

## Eagle Ford credited with regional unemployment dip to 7.5 percent

By Mike D. Smith

Originally published 06:53 p.m., November 18, 2011

Updated 05:59 a.m., November 19, 2011

CORPUS CHRISTI — As companies prepare for another large oil and gas job fair next month, state employment figures show Eagle Ford Shale drilling boosted a seasonal dip in the Coastal Bend's unemployment rate.

The combination lowered the region's October jobless figure to 7.5 percent — a decrease from September's rate of 8 percent and the 7.9 percent rate from October 2010.

"While we are cautiously optimistic with the 0.5 percent drop in the unemployment rate regionally, there are multiple indicators that impact our overall labor force," Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend president and CEO Ken Treviño said. "In addition, a reduction in initial and continued unemployment claims is also a good sign for our region."

Workforce Solutions figures show initial claims for unemployment assistance fell by 401 to 1,700 in October compared with 2010. There were 1,888 fewer continued claims for assistance compared with last year, figures show.

Across the 12-county Coastal Bend region, the trade, transportation and utilities and leisure and hospitality sectors show the strongest annual gains in jobs.

There usually is a slight seasonal decline in the unemployment rate between September and October, but that doesn't account for the entire drop, Texas A&M University economics professor Jim Lee said.

Transportation — especially large truck traffic — has played a major role in Eagle Ford production. Along with other industries, housing needs for extra workers are spurring the hospitality sector, which includes hotels.

Drilling's effect was more pronounced in the counties at the heart of Eagle Ford production. McMullen and Live Oak counties posted October unemployment rates of 5.9 and 6 percent, respectively.

Refugio County posted the region's lowest rate of 5.7 percent, figures show.

The spillover effect continues for areas not directly atop the oil and gas formation. In the Corpus Christi metro area — Aransas, Nueces and San Patricio counties — the transportation and leisure and hospitality sectors showed year-to-year October gains of 2,900 jobs and 2,500 jobs, respectively.

"It's amazing that this trend keeps going up," Lee said.

Next month's release, which will reflect November job numbers, may begin to show the effects of holiday season hiring, which possibly means a lower unemployment rate.

"I'm encouraged to see a dip starting in October," Lee said.

Overall, Texas' unemployment rate fell to 8 percent in October, down from 8.4 percent in September but still higher than the statewide rate of 7.9 percent last year.

## MORE JOBS

Job News USA's San Antonio office, with the help of the Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development Corp., and area chambers of commerce have scheduled a career fair Dec. 7 at the Richard M. Borchard Regional Fairgrounds in Robstown.

The Eagle Ford Shale-related jobs are what Job News USA General Manager Kevin Robbins described as "from the dirt," or involving all parts of oil and gas production, including clearing pads for drilling platforms to drilling, delivery and refining.

"It's actually for the first time every single level," Robbins said of the jobs.

The event is gearing up to have more than 2,000 job offerings, or twice as many as the Oct. 4 Eagle Ford Shale-themed job fair in Beeville, which featured 1,000 job openings and attracted more than 2,000 people.

Companies are still being added to the lineup for the December career fair, Robbins said.

Eagle Ford has opened up a new arena for Job News USA, which usually does job fairs for other fields, such as medical work.

The December job fair will be the fourth and largest oil and gas career fair the company has done — all of them in Texas, Robbins said.

The response to each fair shows the impact of jobs tied to shale drilling, and the company is spreading to other drilling areas such as Midland-Odessa and Colorado, Robbins said.

"It brings so much money to the community," Robbins said. "It helps everyone from the average Joe to the teachers — everyone benefits from it."

## IF YOU GO

What: Job News USA oil and gas job fair

Where: Richard M. Borchard Regional Fairgrounds

When: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 7

Information: [www.jobnewssanantonio.com](http://www.jobnewssanantonio.com) or 210-785-9300.

Participants must preregister, which can be done by phone or online. On the Job News website, click the "Be Part of a Job Fair" link, choose the Dec. 7 date and click "Register."



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