



A nurse works with a patient at Southwest Washington Medical Center. Health care employment is growing in Clark County, but many other sectors are not.

N. SCOTT TRIMBLE/The Columbian

Area jobless rate rises

What should I do now?

The Columbian looks at today's top financial challenges, and steps you can take to protect yourself.



SUNDAY: Stocks have gone haywire.
MONDAY: How safe is my bank?
TUESDAY: Everything costs more.
WEDNESDAY: Financial giants are faltering.
TODAY: Unemployment keeps climbing.
FRIDAY: My house is losing value.

By COURTNEY SHERWOOD
 Columbian staff writer

Clark County's unemployment rate in August spiked to 8.2 percent, one of the worst in the state.

Washington Employment Security Department figures paint the bleakest employment picture for the county since January 2004, when unemployment stood at 9.3 percent. And it could be some time before employment rebounds, said Scott Bailey, labor economist at the Washington Employment Security Department. But there are still opportunities for persistent job-seekers.

How did unemployment get so high?

■ **CUTS:** The number of construction jobs in Clark County has eroded slowly month by month, driven down by the weak housing market. Manufacturing, retail and the arts are also down.

■ **SLOW GROWTH:** "Even when companies are not directly laying off, they're slowing their hiring," said Jessica Nelson, employment economist with the Oregon Employment Department. The number of Clark County jobs has grown only 0.8 per-

cent this year. Jobs grew by more than 2 percent for each of the four past years.

■ **POPULATION:** There were 5,080 more people in Clark County's work force in August than a year ago, but only 1,100 more jobs, according to state figures.

How do we compare to the metropolitan area?

■ **WORSE:** The greater-metro area unemployment rate was 6.1 percent in August. Clark County has been harder hit by the economic slowdown in nearly every sector.

■ **BETTER:** Financial sector employment is down 2.8 in greater Portland, but up 3 percent in Clark County. If Fisher Investments decides to expand in Camas, this sector could grow even more.

■ **OPPORTUNITIES:** There are more than 1 million jobs in the Portland-Vancouver area, with 134,800 of that in Clark County. About 22 percent of Clark County workers commute to Portland.

What's growing and what's shrinking?

■ **HEALTH CARE:** This is the strongest sector in the

Clark County work force by industry

Net change from August 2007

Construction
 12,800 jobs ↓ 700

Manufacturing
 13,900 jobs ↓ 200

Trade, transportation
 25,800 jobs ↑ 100

Information, financial services
 9,600 jobs ↑ 100

Professional, business services
 15,800 jobs ↑ 500

Education and health services
 17,700 jobs ↑ 600

Leisure and hospitality
 13,900 jobs ↑ 100

Other services
 4,600 jobs ↑ 100

Government
 20,700 jobs ↑ 500

Employment:

From Page E1

county and in the metro area, Bailey said. Nurses, health aides and medical secretaries are in demand.

■ **CONSTRUCTION:** Construction jobs are down 5.2 percent in the past year in Clark County, and by a similar

amount in Portland.

What should I do now?

■ **STAY PUT:** "Don't quit your day job," said Catharine Keane, career information specialist at Clark College. When jobless rates are high, be sure you have something lined up before you jump ship.

■ **BOOST YOUR RÉSUMÉ:** Volunteer in your field, look

for internships, or take a class to learn new skills. You'll add content to your résumé while you also make new connections, Keane said. Then get a professional to critique the résumé before you send it out.

■ **KEEP LOOKING:** "There are jobs with more opportunities than others, but even in a tough field there are opportunities," Keane said. Ask friends and family for job

referrals, and don't give up hope when it takes awhile,

■ **ASK AN EXPERT:** Clark College career counselors can help any community member — not just enrolled students. The number: 360-992-2155.

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