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Franklin County's jobless rate drops again

By [MARCUS RAUHUT](#) Staff writer

Franklin County's unemployment rate dropped for the second straight month.

April's unemployment fell 0.2 percentage point to 8.6 percent.

"Once we see three-plus months of continued improvements, we'll be more inclined to say it's a trend, but all the indicators appear to be very favorable," said L. Michael Ross, president of Franklin County Area Development Corp.

The total number of jobs in the county also improved in April, according to the monthly work force report from the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis. It was the first over-the-month job gain since September.

Warmer weather brought back some jobs in the mining, logging and construction industries in April.

Professional and business service jobs were also up slightly, due in part to seasonal hiring by tax preparers and landscapers, the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis said.

Warmer weather meant seasonal layoffs in the leisure and hospitality sector with the end of the ski-snowboard season at Whitetail Resort near Mercersburg. But the summer travel season ahead is expected to increase employment county-wide in the leisure and hospitality sector.

Hiring outlooks have improved from this time last year, but the mood among many companies is still "cautiously optimistic," said David Sciamanna, president of Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce.

"In talking to employers, we see much more optimism about hiring going forward than what we saw last year," he said.

"The business cycle, we believe, is beginning to turn. I think there's cautious optimism that things will gradually improve over the remaining months and into next year."

Neighboring Fulton County's jobless rate also improved for the second straight month, dropping slightly to 12.1 percent.

Overall employment in manufacturing remained steady and other goods-producing jobs picked up small gains. The total number of jobs was up slightly.

In Franklin County, job losses in manufacturing have finally slowed down. Overall employment in manufacturing has remained steady between February and April but is still nearly 1,000 positions lower compared to April 2009.

"I'm not ready to say we're totally out of the woods, but all indicators are we're moving in the right direction," Ross said. "What I find encouraging with

manufacturers is they've been calling people back. The original equipment manufacturers, when they are starting to call people back, it's a good sign because it's a good indicator that things are picking up, which means their supply chain will also be hiring people back."

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