



In metropolitan San Jose, made up of Santa Clara and San Benito counties, the December unemployment rate was 7.8 percent, up from 5.1 percent the previous year.

In the Oakland metropolitan area, covering Alameda and Contra Costa counties, the unemployment rate was 7.7 percent. A year ago it was 5 percent.

### **December bad for retailers**

Retailers typically increase payrolls in December, but an analysis by state labor market analyst Ruth Kavanagh shows that even those jobs dried up last month. Over the past 18 years, retailers in the region's three metropolitan areas have added an average of 9,200 jobs in December. But Kavanagh said retail payrolls actually shrank by 700 jobs last month.

The numbers mask the human toll. The state counted 1.7 million Californians as unemployed in January, meaning they had searched fruitlessly for work within the past four weeks. A year ago at this time, roughly a third as many people, 653,000, fit that description.

Amy Gorman, a former business owner who took time off to be a stay-at-home mom in the East Bay, has been looking since September to no avail.

"Everything is being delayed," said Gorman, who has interviews but no offers in her chosen field of solar sales.

San Rafael resident Mike Altman has some contract work while he looks for a permanent position in private equity, mergers or corporate finance.

"I'm hitting my head against the wall," Altman said.

### **'Looking for best of best'**

San Francisco resident Sarah Gilson is having a tough time putting her new law degree to work in a hard-pressed local legal market.

"You're trying to convince people you are a good investment when nobody has the funds to invest," she said.

Burton Goldfield, chief executive of TriNet HR Services, a San Leandro firm that does hiring and payroll for small businesses, said employers in this type of job market set the bar high. "I'm looking for the best of the best," he said.

He advised job seekers to be persistent and seek referrals when they get wind of an opening. "The last five people I hired all had recommendations from people I knew," Goldfield said.

Employment professionals say even in tough times some jobs open up. One repository for those looking for work - or needing to hire - is the employment department's job board at [www.caljobs.ca.gov](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov).

But many jobs are being destroyed. A database of pending layoffs, collected by the state and displayed on *sfgate.com*, shows almost 650 warning notices issued by employers in a wide array of industries and cities.

To view the database, go to *sfgate.com/webdb/jobcuts*.

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/01/24/MNEU15FUSA.DTL>

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