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## Area Jobless Rate Rises To 6.1 Percent Staffing Firm, Job Seeker Report Tough Go In Down Economy

LAST UPDATED WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2009 6:13 PM CDT IN NEWS

By [Lana F. Flowers](#)  
THE MORNING NEWS

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SPRINGDALE — About 4,900 fewer Northwest Arkansas residents have jobs this June than last year, after the June unemployment rate rose to 6.1 percent.

That rate means 14,300 Northwest Arkansas residents are without work.

The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics released the monthly unemployment figures Wednesday. The Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers metropolitan statistical area includes Benton, Madison and Washington counties and McDonald County, Mo.

The area's unemployment rate was 4.1 percent in June 2008, meaning about 9,400 people didn't have jobs, said Kathy Deck, director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas.

The region is faring better than Arkansas as a whole. The state unemployment rate was 7.5 percent in June, a 2.3 percent rise from the 5.2 percent rate in June 2008, according to federal labor figures.

The region also fares better than the nation, which reported a 9.7 percent unemployment rate.

The unemployment rate includes those who are actively looking for work but cannot find jobs. The figure excludes stay-at-home parents, retired people, those who are on disability and cannot work and those who have given up seeking jobs.

The increasing jobless rate makes it harder for Brenda Dougan, owner of Springdale-based ASAP Service, to find jobs for people through her staffing company.

"The down side started for us in probably March," Dougan said. That's when she noticed companies weren't hiring.

"We have been in this business for 19 years. We have never had to make sales calls on clients, because there were far more jobs than there were people," Dougan said. "This is the worst year we have had since 1993."

ASAP Services places workers with poultry companies, general manufacturing firms and construction firms. ASAP, like most staffing companies, collects a percentage-based fee from companies who hire the service's workers.

Gary Lowe of Bella Vista searched for four months before finding a job offer he accepted May 15. Lowe said he started work June 15 as national account manager with TomTom, which sells personal navigation devices for vehicles.

Lowe will maintain TomTom accounts with Wal-Mart and Sam's Club, so he won't have to relocate.

"I am very happy," he said, as his new salary is equivalent to the one he earned at Genius Products, an entertainment program distributor, before he lost his job there in late January.

Though Lowe is employed now, he only found a job after "a very aggressive search," including using a LinkedIn internet site profile to connect with former business and college colleagues who referred him to job possibilities.

Lowe said LinkedIn helped him land the TomTom job.

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"I found a former business associate and good friend who was connected to and had worked with a senior management person at TomTom," Lowe said. "He reached out on my behalf and gave me a recommendation, which certainly helped when I got a call for an interview."

Lowe also said he searched job Web sites and applied for numerous jobs nationwide.

Those who haven't found a job yet may have a tougher go in the future, Deck said. Economists predict national unemployment will increase to as much as 11 percent and Northwest Arkansas numbers are trending about 3 percent below national rates, she said.

That means the region's unemployment rate could increase to 8 percent and July's unemployment rate is likely to be higher than in June.

"July is a seasonally high month for unemployment" as school employees who work nine months per year are out of jobs, Deck said. Those school employees are counted in unemployment figures if they look for three-month summer jobs but can't find them.

Deck said after July's unemployment numbers, "you need to see some improvement to see the seasons are acting like they do in a typical economy."

Dougan said the third and fourth quarters usually are her staffing service's busiest times because a major poultry processor who is one of her clients ramps up food production to supply holiday dinners. In addition, a candle and gift maker usually accelerates production ahead of the holiday shopping season, she said.

Dougan hopes to end the year with about the same bottom line as last year, though she noted the first six months of 2009 were worse financially than last year.

Lowe advises those looking for work to keep networking and continue attending seminars and professional events.

"Keep active and stay positive," he said.

#### Web Watch

Bureau of Labor Statistics

[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

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**ozarks** wrote on *Jul 29, 2009 7:44 PM*:

" Wonder why it is so high here? There is lot's of industry and work?Should be plenty of work to go around? "

**BigTex** wrote on *Jul 29, 2009 8:48 PM*:

" Well the national rate is about 9.5% so things aren't all that bad in NWA. "

**sunflowerboat** wrote on *Jul 29, 2009 9:37 PM*:

" This is a big reason to Vote NO NEW TAXES either millage or sales "

**lifer66** wrote on *Jul 29, 2009 10:08 PM*:

" Throw in the part-time and underemployed and that figure will likely double. "

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**keith19633** wrote on *Jul 29, 2009 10:19 PM*:

" TO OZARKS- HELLO! ILLEGALS!!! WILLING TO WORK FOR 3 DOLLARS A HOUR! THATS NO WORK AROUND HERE! "

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**AnIllegal** wrote on *Jul 29, 2009 10:48 PM*:

" Hi Keith, I dont work for \$3.00 an hour, sorry, nor do none of my illegal friends work for \$3.00 an hour. With the cost of living rising, we cant afford it, but since we do great work and dont complain, its easier for us to get jobs pretty quick, we are not picky about where we work, we just want the work/hours to support our family and pursue the american dream. God Bless this country, and all the fine posters of NWAonline.net "

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**pgjohnw** wrote on *Jul 30, 2009 9:39 AM*:

" taxes rate raised/minimum wage rises. businesses cant pay so they layoff. those laid off cant spend so sales tax revenue decreases. tax revanue goes down tax rates go up. back to the beginning. "

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**AnIllegal** wrote on *Jul 30, 2009 10:08 AM*:

" Very well put john, its a formula just destined to fail. I think the MW shouldnt have been increased until we as a country are back on our feet and out of this recession, as bad as things are now, having all the small business pay more is just going to make it more difficult for them to continue operating "

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**keith19633** wrote on *Jul 30, 2009 10:26 AM*:

" to anillegal- cute name! am sorry you think you above the law! and i hope you enjoy the jobs you and your friends have stolen! "

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