

Oklahoma City reports lowest jobless rate of U.S. cities

The 5.5 percent unemployment in Oklahoma City is lowest in the nation; meanwhile, nearly all of Oklahoma's counties report rise.

BY JENNIFER PALMER jpalmer@opubco.com  3
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The jobless rate rose in 73 of Oklahoma's 77 counties in September, but Oklahoma City again reported the lowest unemployment of the nation's largest cities.

The 5.5 percent unemployment rate in Oklahoma City was 0.5 percent higher than in August but still the lowest of U.S. cities with 1 million or more residents, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Tulsa metro area's jobless rate rose to 6.4 percent in September, from 6.0 percent a month earlier.

Jobs in demand

Lynn Flinn, president of the Rowland Group of Staffing Companies in Tulsa, said there is strong demand for skilled positions such as accounting, engineering and specialized technology jobs, including those that deal with mobile apps.

“In fact, there are many, many times we have so many jobs we can't even get to it all,” Flinn said. “We have certain skilled positions that we really have struggled with finding enough talent for, and we have to go out and actively recruit to find those people.”

Flinn also noted the “fight for talent” to fill specialized jobs.

“The oil and gas industry creates a lot of squabbles over talent, so they bid the prices up sometimes,” she said. “Salaries are still in good places, too, for the candidates. When you're talking about these very skilled professional levels, there are plentiful jobs; it's just a matter of them going to find the talent.”

Unemployment rates were lower in September than a year earlier in 249 of the 372 metro areas nationwide, were higher in 102 areas and remained steady in 21 areas, the report states. National unemployment was 8.8 percent, not seasonally adjusted, down from 9.2 percent a year earlier.

Both Oklahoma City and Tulsa saw increases among the employed.

The total number of those employed in the Oklahoma City metro rose 1 percent in September and Tulsa had a 1.4 increase in employment.

John Carpenter, a spokesman for the commission, said the simultaneous increase in employment and unemployment is likely explained by discouraged workers re-entering the workforce because they see opportunity. The report was “mixed,” he said.

“It's not all good news, but it's not all bad news,” Carpenter said.

CONTRIBUTING: LAURIE WINSLOW, TULSA WORLD



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