

Berkshires

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LOCAL NEWS IN BRIEF

PITTSFIELD

Berkshire unemployment ticks up in January

After holding steady at 8.1 percent for three consecutive months, the Berkshire County unemployment rate jumped more than half a percentage point in January.

For the third month in a row, the Berkshire jobless rate, now 8.8 percent, remained above the state rate, which rose from 7.3 to 7.5 percent in January, according to the state Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. The national unemployment rate is 6.8 percent.

The figures are not seasonally adjusted, which means they take into account short-term employment, such as seasonal construction jobs or positions in the travel and tourism industry. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Massachusetts dropped from 8.4 percent to 7.8 percent in January.

Berkshire unemployment is at its highest level since September, when it was 8.7 percent. The Berkshire jobless rate typically experiences a "seasonal bump" at the beginning of each calendar year as temporary holiday employment opportunities end and some companies complete their fiscal years.

Companies in the latter position frequently downsize in January or lay off personnel.

The county's total labor force dropped by 209 workers in January, to 61,747, with the number of employed workers dropping by 508, to 5,429. There are 129 more county residents collecting jobless benefits in January than in December.