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Vermont's unemployment picture improves, dipping to 5.8 percent

By [Bruce Edwards](#)

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Led by the manufacturing sector, Vermont's unemployment picture continued to improve last month, dipping to 5.8 percent, a decline of 0.2 percent from August, the state Department of Labor reported Friday.

A year ago the state's unemployment rate stood at 6.8 percent.

"The manufacturing sector is reporting the highest level of employment since second quarter of 2009," Valerie Rickert, acting commissioner of the Vermont Department of Labor, said in a release. "This is an indication of increased confidence by employers. The Vermont economy continues to show positive trends as we gain distance from the trough of the last business cycle, which occurred in June 2009."

By comparison, the September U.S. seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 9.6 percent.

Unemployment rates for the state's 17 labor markets ranged from 3.6 percent in Hartford to 7 percent in Newport. Durable goods manufacturing posted a gain of 400 jobs last month, the second consecutive month of what the department called a "notable job increase."

The Rutland area unemployment rate also fell slightly last month to 6.5 percent from 6.7 percent the previous month.

Bennington saw a bigger improvement, falling a half percent to 5.9 percent.

In the Rutland area, manufacturing jobs picked up at GE Aviation, Westminster Crackers and Vermont Wood Pellets, said Larry Sudlow, manager of the Department of Labor's Rutland and Bennington offices.

He said Bennington saw job gains at **Mack Molding** and Vermont Composites.

The Barre-Montpelier area is seeing significant job gains in manufacturing. Susan Matthews of the Central Vermont Economic Development Corp. said Northern Power Systems, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters and SB Electronics have been in a hiring mode.

"We're very lucky," said Matthews, CVEDC executive vice president. She said the jobs gains will help offset the loss at the end of the year of Suss Microtech, which makes

specialty machinery for the semiconductor industry.

Matthews also said the retail and service sectors have not rebounded as quickly from the recession.

The Barre-Montpelier unemployment rate declined 0.3 percent in September to 5.1 percent.

Sudlow said not to be overlooked is the role the hospitality industry played in last month's improved employment picture.

"Many restaurants, motels and inns put on extra staff for fall foliage and that ... will probably continue into the next month," Sudlow said.

With the foliage season winding down, the state's ski areas have started hiring. Also on the seasonal front, Sudlow said The Vermont Country Store is hiring help as it gears up for the holiday shopping season.

He said the economy continues to pick up "maybe a little slower than we would like but it is headed in the right direction."

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