

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD
MONTHLY LABOR MARKET INFORMATION UPDATE
September 2002

- The September 2002 California seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 6.3 percent, down 0.1 percentage point from the August result. This figure was up 0.6 percentage points from one year ago.
- Nonfarm jobs gained in August was almost erased by a 15,800-job loss in September. In the first nine months of this year, total nonfarm jobs have fallen by 9,300 for an average of a little over 1,000 jobs per month.
- Three sectors saw month-over job gains, government, services and trade. Manufacturing took the hardest hit with a loss of over 10,000 jobs.
- Average hourly earning for California production workers in manufacturing were \$15.00 in September and average weekly earnings were slightly more than \$613.00.
- The U.S. Department of Labor reports that nation-wide, the high tech industry dropped 437,000 jobs over the past 18 months. This is an eight percent drop since January 2001. The DOL does say that this trend appears to be leveling off and the “worst might be over”.
- California farm payrolls rose by 10,600 jobs in September while Merced County posted a modest 300-job increase. However, the 12,600 jobs counted in September was down 1,000 from the number at the same time last year.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported earlier this month that household borrowing slowed sharply over the past two months and posted its smallest gain in eight months. The Federal Reserve reported consumer credit rose \$4.2 billion in August, the smallest gain since December 2001.
- The U.S. Energy Department has indicated winter heating bills will be sharply higher than one year ago because of adverse weather trends and war concerns. The Energy Department experts, in there annual heating season forecast, Northwestern households could expect a 45 percent increase bills over the span of the winter heating season while the West, not normally affected by the weather would see an appreciable increase in fuel pump prices.
- In September, 259 metropolitan areas recorded higher unemployment rates than one-year ago. Seven metro areas had jobless rates of at least 10 percent, of which three were located in California’s agricultural Central Valley, including the Merced Metropolitan Statistical Area (Merced County).
- A side note on the longshoremen strike which is yet unresolved. The work stoppage, which was ended earlier this month by President Bush’s invoking of the Taft-Hartley Act, wasn’t over salaries of the longshoremen, themselves, but over only a few hundred clerical jobs usually paying nearly \$120,000. Average pay for dockworkers is \$82,700, while bosses and foremen earn an average pay of over \$157,000 per year.