



Central Minnesota unemployment lower than national rate

 **Vicki Ikeogu**, vikeogu@stcloudtimes.com 4:12 p.m. CDT June 23, 2015



(Photo: Times graphic)

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Month-over-month unemployment rates have improved once again for Central Minnesota.

Numbers from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development revealed Tuesday the two-county St. Cloud Metropolitan Statistical Area and the wider seven-county region have experienced slight improvements last month. The seven counties in that area are Benton, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd and Wright.

All seven counties and the MSA reported unemployment rates below the national rate. The U.S. unemployment rate for May was 5.3 percent, 0.2 percentage points higher than April.

Mille Lacs County saw the largest month-over-month decline, from 6.3 percent in April to 5.2 percent in May. But Mille Lacs has reported the largest unemployment rate for the seven-county area.

Stearns County saw the smallest month-over-month decline, down 0.1 of a percentage point from April's unemployment rate of 3.6 percent to 3.5 percent in May.

Both Stearns and Wright counties reported the lowest unemployment rate in the Central Minnesota area. Both have a 3.5 percent unemployment rate.

Modest improvements were made in the unemployment rate for the seven-county area and St. Cloud MSA compared with May 2014. Five of the seven counties and the MSA reported rate declines of between 0.1 and 0.6 of a percentage point. Stearns County's rate remained unchanged during the 12-month period. Todd County saw an increase of 0.1 of a percentage point.

Across the state, Minnesota's unemployment rate for May is 3.6 percent. Only the MSA, Stearns and Wright counties are at or below this number, reporting 3.6, 3.5 and 3.5 respectively.

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LOCAL UNEMPLOYMENT

May '15	April '15	May '14
3.6	3.6	3.6

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St. Cloud MSA*	3.6	3.8	3.7
Benton County	4.2	4.6	4.3
Mille Lacs County	5.2	6.3	5.8
Morrison County	4.8	5.8	5.1
Sherburne County	3.7	4	4
Stearns County	3.5	3.6	3.5
Todd County	3.8	4.3	3.7
Wright County	3.5	3.7	3.7

* Metropolitan Statistical Area

Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

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