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Central Valley job growth 'flat, cautious' says report

MILWAUKEE, WIS.

December 8, 2009 5:45am

- **U.S. employers plan to increase hiring in Q1**
- **'There is still a lot of ground to make up in the labor market'**

Even as employers around the nation say they anticipate a moderate increase in their hiring plans for the first quarter of the New Year, hiring plans for those in the Central Valley are "flat," "cautious," "unsteady" and "reserved," says a report Tuesday from the staffing company Manpower Inc.

"There is still a lot of ground to make up in the labor market, but the overall increase in hiring intentions is clearly a positive," says Manpower Chairman and CEO Jeff Joerres. "The first quarter is a seasonally slow hiring quarter. To see an increase over the fourth quarter is unusual and seems to indicate increased confidence levels from employers."

Of the more than 28,000 employers surveyed, 12 percent anticipate an increase in staff levels in their Quarter 1 2010 hiring plans, while 12 percent expect a decrease in payrolls, resulting in a net employment outlook of 0 percent. But when seasonally adjusted, the outlook becomes +6 percent.

Seventy-three percent of employers expect no change in their hiring plans, the highest in the survey's history. The final 3 percent of employers indicate they are undecided about their hiring intentions.

"The data points to encouraging news. A record number of employers plan to keep staff levels stable, which is good for the employed, and an overall positive outlook means expanding opportunities for job seekers," says Jonas Prising, Manpower president of the Americas. "Employer uncertainty around hiring is shifting from whether to consider adding staff, to when - and at what rate - to make the investment."

While the national trend could be read as encouraging, there is little of that cautious optimism in the Central Valley, according to Manpower's surveys.

Here is the company's analysis:

- Bakersfield

Soft job market expected

Bakersfield area employers expect to hire at a slow pace during the first quarter of 2010, according to the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey.

From January to March, 15 percent of the companies interviewed plan to hire more employees, while 18 percent expect to reduce their payrolls, according to Manpower spokeswoman Jackie Mahoney. Another 63 percent expect to maintain their current staff levels and 4 percent are not certain of their hiring plans.

"Compared with the previous quarter when 11 percent of companies interviewed intended to add employees, and 23 percent planned to reduce staff levels, area hiring levels appear to be stronger," says Ms. Mahoney.

"Employers are much less optimistic about hiring activity as compared to one year ago, when 20 percent of companies surveyed planned to increase staff levels and 13 percent expected to cut payrolls."

For the coming quarter, job prospects appear best in Construction, Durable Goods Manufacturing, Professional & Business Services, Education & Health Services and Government. Employers in Nondurable Goods Manufacturing, Transportation & Utilities, Wholesale & Retail Trade, Financial Activities and Leisure & Hospitality plan to reduce staffing levels, while hiring in Information and Other Services is expected to remain unchanged.

- Fresno

Unsteady job market expected

Fresno area employers expect to hire at a slow pace during the first quarter of 2010, according to the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey.

From January to March, 11 percent of the companies interviewed plan to hire more employees, while 16 percent

expect to reduce their payrolls, according to Manpower spokeswoman Jackie Mahoney. Another 68 percent expect to maintain their current staff levels and 5 percent are not certain of their hiring plans.

"Compared with the previous quarter when 14 percent of companies interviewed intended to add employees, and 19 percent planned to reduce staff levels, area hiring levels appear to be stable," says Ms. Mahoney. "Employers are much less optimistic about hiring activity as compared to one year ago, when 19 percent of companies surveyed planned to increase staff levels and 12 percent expected to cut payrolls."

For the coming quarter, job prospects appear best in Transportation & Utilities and Information. Employers in Construction, Durable and Nondurable Goods Manufacturing, Professional & Business Services and Education & Health Services plan to reduce staffing levels, while hiring in Wholesale & Retail Trade, Financial Activities, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services and Government is expected to remain unchanged.

- Chico

Flat job market expected

Chico area employers expect to hire at a soft pace during the first quarter of 2010, according to the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey.

From January to March, 12 percent of the companies interviewed plan to hire more employees, while 12 percent expect to reduce their payrolls, according to Manpower spokeswoman Lucy Thomas. Another 75 percent expect to maintain their current staff levels and 1 percent are not certain of their hiring plans.

"Compared with the previous quarter when 10 percent of companies interviewed intended to add employees, and 13 percent planned to reduce staff levels, area hiring levels appear to be slightly stronger," says Ms. Thomas. "Employers are slightly more optimistic about hiring activity as compared to one year ago, when 13 percent of companies surveyed planned to increase staff levels and 16 percent expected to cut payrolls."

For the coming quarter, job prospects appear best in Financial Activities, Education & Health Services, Leisure & Hospitality and Other Services. Employers in Construction, Nondurable Goods Manufacturing, Transportation & Utilities and Wholesale & Retail Trade plan to reduce staffing levels, while hiring in Durable Goods Manufacturing, Information, Professional & Business Services and Government is expected to remain unchanged.

- Merced

Cautious job market expected

Merced area employers expect to hire at a slow pace during the first quarter of 2010, according to the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey.

From January to March, 6 percent of the companies interviewed plan to hire more employees, while 12 percent expect to reduce their payrolls, according to Manpower spokeswoman Lucy Thomas. Another 76 percent expect to maintain their current staff levels and 6 percent are not certain of their hiring plans.

"Compared with the previous quarter when 6 percent of companies interviewed intended to add employees, and 14 percent planned to reduce staff levels, area hiring levels appear to be slightly stronger," says Ms. Thomas. "Employers are slightly more optimistic about hiring activity as compared to one year ago, when 8 percent of companies surveyed planned to increase staff levels and 16 percent expected to cut payrolls."

For the coming quarter, job prospects appear best in Nondurable Goods Manufacturing. Employers in Construction, Transportation & Utilities, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services and Government plan to reduce staffing levels, while hiring in Durable Goods Manufacturing, Wholesale & Retail Trade, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services and Education & Health Services is expected to remain unchanged.

- Modesto

Unstable job market expected

Modesto area employers expect to hire at a soft pace during the first quarter of 2010, according to the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey.

From January to March, 8 percent of the companies interviewed plan to hire more employees, while 12 percent expect to reduce their payrolls, according to Manpower spokeswoman Lucy Thomas. Another 76 percent expect to maintain their current staff levels and 4 percent are not certain of their hiring plans.

"Compared with the previous quarter when 9 percent of companies interviewed intended to add employees, and 15 percent planned to reduce staff levels, area hiring levels appear to be slightly stronger," says Ms. Thomas. "Employers have similar hiring intentions compared to one year ago, when 12 percent of companies surveyed planned to increase staff levels and 17 percent expected to cut payrolls."

For the coming quarter, job prospects appear best in Professional & Business Services and Leisure & Hospitality.

Employers in Construction, Wholesale & Retail Trade, Financial Activities, Education & Health Services, Other Services and Government plan to reduce staffing levels, while hiring in Durable and Nondurable Goods Manufacturing, Transportation & Utilities and Information is expected to remain unchanged.

- Sacramento

Flat job market expected

Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Roseville area employers expect to hire at a limited pace during the first quarter of 2010, according to the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey.

From January to March, 13 percent of the companies interviewed plan to hire more employees, while 15 percent expect to reduce their payrolls, according to Manpower spokesman Michael Dourgarian. Another 68 percent expect to maintain their current staff levels and 4 percent are not certain of their hiring plans.

"Compared with the previous quarter when 11 percent of companies interviewed intended to add employees, and 14 percent planned to reduce staff levels, area hiring levels appear to be stable," says Mr. Dourgarian.

"Employers have similar hiring intentions compared to one year ago, when 16 percent of companies surveyed planned to increase staff levels and 18 percent expected to cut payrolls."

For the coming quarter, job prospects appear best in Durable Goods Manufacturing, Transportation & Utilities, Wholesale & Retail Trade and Information. Employers in Construction, Professional & Business Services, Education & Health Services and Government plan to reduce staffing levels, while hiring in Nondurable Goods Manufacturing, Financial Activities, Leisure & Hospitality and Other Services is expected to remain unchanged.

- Stockton

Reserved job market expected

Stockton area employers expect to hire at a cautious pace during the first quarter of 2010, according to the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey.

From January to March, 9 percent of the companies interviewed plan to hire more employees, while 13 percent expect to reduce their payrolls, according to Manpower spokeswoman Lucy Thomas. Another 73 percent expect to maintain their current staff levels and 5 percent are not certain of their hiring plans.

"Compared with the previous quarter when 10 percent of companies interviewed intended to add employees, and 22 percent planned to reduce staff levels, area hiring levels appear to be stronger," says Ms. Thomas. "Employers have similar hiring intentions compared to one year ago, when 10 percent of companies surveyed planned to increase staff levels and 15 percent expected to cut payrolls."

For the coming quarter, job prospects appear best in Construction, Nondurable Goods Manufacturing, Wholesale & Retail Trade, Professional & Business Services, Leisure & Hospitality and Other Services. Employers in Durable Goods Manufacturing, Transportation & Utilities, Financial Activities and Education & Health Services plan to reduce staffing levels, while hiring in Government is expected to remain unchanged.

- Visalia-Porterville

Flat job market expected

Visalia-Porterville area employers expect to hire at a cautious pace during the first quarter of 2010, according to the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey.

From January to March, 14 percent of the companies interviewed plan to hire more employees, while 14 percent expect to reduce their payrolls, according to Manpower spokeswoman Jackie Mahoney. Another 69 percent expect to maintain their current staff levels and 3 percent are not certain of their hiring plans.

"Compared with the previous quarter when 15 percent of companies interviewed intended to add employees, and 23 percent planned to reduce staff levels, area hiring levels appear to be stronger," said Jackie Mahoney.

"Employers are slightly less optimistic about hiring activity as compared to one year ago, when 15 percent of companies surveyed planned to increase staff levels and 13 percent expected to cut payrolls."

For the coming quarter, job prospects appear best in Durable Goods Manufacturing, Transportation & Utilities, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Education & Health Services and Leisure & Hospitality. Employers in Construction, Wholesale & Retail Trade, Other Services and Government plan to reduce staffing levels, while hiring in Nondurable Goods Manufacturing and Information is expected to remain unchanged.

The national survey data shows employers in Mining, Durable Goods Manufacturing, Information and Government expect hiring to moderately increase in Quarter 1 2010, while slight increases are expected among employers in Nondurable Goods Manufacturing, Transportation & Utilities, Professional & Business Services, Education & Health Services, Leisure & Hospitality and Other Services. Employers in two industry sectors, Construction and Wholesale & Retail Trade, anticipate a slight decrease in hiring levels. Financial Activities employers intend to

maintain relatively stable staff levels.

When compared to a year ago, employers in the West are the most confident, but all of the survey regions have weaker year-over-year employment outlooks. Using the seasonally adjusted data, all regions anticipate moderate quarter-over-quarter increases in staff levels, with employer confidence highest in the South and Midwest.

Methodology

The Manpower Employment Outlook Survey's United States results are based on interviews with more than 28,000 employers located within 200 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), as defined by the federal government, and one MSA in Puerto Rico. The mix of U.S. industries within the survey follows the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Supersectors and is structured to be representative of the U.S. economy. The national survey carries a margin of error of +/- .49 percent.

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