Unemployment rising steeply in Acadiana

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BATON ROUGE — Unemployment in Acadiana parishes continued to rise in January as holiday and inventory workers were laid off and inclement weather halted outdoor work.

The rates also were worsened by a new-year system of computing unemployment which boosted expected figures almost a full percentage point.

Statewide, the rate was 12 percent, up from 9.5 percent in December. State Department of Labor officials say they expected a 1.5 percent increase because of seasonal layoffs.

The national rate was 6.3 percent, up from 5.4 percent in December, but still almost half of Louisiana’s rate.

Three out of four parishes surrounding Lafayette had more than 17 percent unemployment.

Vermilion Parish had the worst rate — 17.7 percent — which was 3.5 percentage points above the prior month. About 3,525 of the parish’s 19,900 workers were unemployed in January.

In St. Landry Parish, which had the second worst rate, unemployment climbed 3.8 points from the December rate of 13.7 percent to 17.5 percent in January. Of the 33,300 people in the workforce, 27,450 had jobs and another 5,850 were without work.

In Iberia Parish, 4,275 were unemployed, driving the rate up from 13.2 percent to 17.1 percent. Of the 25,000 workers in the parish, 4,275 were unemployed.

Acadia had the best employment picture of local parishes — 15.1 percent unemployment, up from 12.5 percent in December. Of the 22,600 workers, 3,425 were unemployed.

St. Martin Parish is included in the Lafayette labor market area. Its unemployment rate for January was 11.4 percent, up from 9.1 percent in December. The total labor force is 97,900, of which 86,700 were employed and 11,200 were jobless.

Benefits paid to unemployed workers in area parishes were:

- Acadia — $329,648;
- Iberia — $323,700;
- St. Landry — $547,910;
- St. Martin — $248,031; and
- Vermilion — $344,736.