6.3 million now receiving benefits



DON RYAN / The Associated Press

Randy McSorley looks for work at a Worksource office in Portland, Ore. The government said Thursday that fewer newly laid-off workers registered for unemployment insurance last week.

New jobless claims post unexpected drop

There were 30,000 fewer first-time filings last week than projected

By Christopher S. Rugaber
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The number of newly laid-off workers seeking unemployment benefits fell last week, the government said Thursday, a sign that the job market is making gradual improvement.

Job losses are likely to slow in coming months, economists said, a trend that could be reflected in the government's July unemployment report to be released Friday.

"We believe the lower claims figures are an important economic development and confirmation that the economy is turning the corner," Joseph LaVorgna, chief U.S. economist at Deutsche Bank, wrote in a note to clients.

First-time claims for jobless benefits dropped to a seasonally adjusted 550,000 for the week ending Aug. 1, down from an upwardly revised figure of 588,000 in the previous week, the Labor Department said.

That was much lower than analysts' estimates of 580,000, according to a survey by Thomson Reuters. And the four-week average of claims, which smooths out fluctuations, dropped to 555,250, its lowest point since late January.

State data lags behind initial claims data by one week. However, Ohio reported it had the biggest increase in new claims for the week — 891 — while North Carolina reported it had the largest drop in new claims — 9,809 — which it said was due to fewer layoffs in the textile, furniture, rubber and plastics, and industrial machinery industries.

The number of people continuing to claim benefits nationwide rose by 69,000 to 6.3 million, after having dropped for three straight weeks — evidence that job openings remain scarce and the unemployed are having difficulty finding new work.

Some economists now say today's unemployment report could show much smaller job losses in July than in recent months. LaVorgna has reduced his estimate of payroll cuts to 150,000, from 325,000.

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the workforce development program.

Prospective students for the free training must attend a one-hour orientation session at the Tracey Gaines Auditorium on the college's central campus Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Additional orientation sessions will be scheduled later in the year.

Registration can be completed by calling 864-562-4168 or going online at onestopcareer.com/registration.aspx.

The Manufacturing Skills Standards Council assessment training, which has four modules dealing with manufacturing processes and production, maintenance awareness, quality and continuous improvement and safety, will result in students becoming MSSC certified production technicians, he said. This certification "is recognized all over the country," he said.

And the certification is not specific to automotive jobs, said Johnnie-Lynn Crosby, business services coordinator with the Workforce Investment Board.

"We would like to train 1,500," she said. "We will train as many as funds allow."

She said she's not concerned about flooding the market since production technician is a position at many other manufacturing facilities.