Jobless rate hits 15-year low for second straight month

Unemployment rate down to 5.2 percent

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The state unemployment rate declined for the third straight month in July, reaching a level of 5.2 percent, according to the state Department of Employment and Workforce. It is also the second consecutive month that the statistic has hit a 15-year low, which it first did in June, when the unemployment rate was 5.4 percent.

Unemployment declined by 4,858 people in July, with the number of unemployed people reaching 120,788.

Employment also declined by 2,430 people to 2,182,646. Those declines resulted in an overall workforce decline of 7,288, according to DEW.

When the workforce declines in number, it means people may have moved out of state, stoppped seeking work or left the workforce for reasons like caregiving. In June, there was also a decline in the workforce of 4,161 people.

"We are encouraged to see the unemployment rate fall to levels not achieved in over 15 years. We also are heartened by the job growth we've experienced in the first half of the year as more than 32,000 people found jobs and are now providing for their families. This reflects the confidence businesses have in South Carolina's workforce," said Cheryl Stanton, executive director of DEW in a statement. "We still have work to do matching the skills of the 120,000 unemployed to the job opportunities around the state."