Unemployment rate drops in Upstate

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SENECA — Four months of spiraling unemployment mercifully came to an end in Oconee and Pickens counties.

The latest state labor market report released Friday shows that the jobless rate dipped by more than 1 percent in both counties.

Oconee's unemployment rate dropped to 10.9 percent in September from 12 percent the previous month.

Likewise, Pickens County saw its jobless rate improve to 9.5 percent in September from 10.7 percent in August.

The good news breaks a string of escalating unemployment in both counties, the Upstate and South Carolina that raised concerns of a possible double-dip recession.

Officials at the Seneca and Liberty One-Stop workforce centers attributed much of the climb in unemployment from April to August to typical summer layoffs by some manufacturing plants, as well as schools, colleges and universities in the area.

One-Stop officials predicted that the jobless rate would dip at the conclusion of the summer break.

Greenville had the lowest unemployment rate in the Upstate at 9 percent.

Marion County had the state's highest unemployment rate at 18.6 percent and Lexington County had the state's lowest at 7.9 percent.

South Carolina remained with the nation's sixth highest jobless rate at 11 percent, an improvement of one-tenth of a percent from the previous month.

Most of South Carolina's job gains in September came from the government sector (+14,4300). The private sector was down more than 12,600 jobs with gains seen in manufacturing (+200) and education and health services (+3,900).

COUNTY JOBLESS RATES

County; Sept. 2010; Aug. 2010; Sept. 2009
Greenville; 9%; 9.8%; 10.9%
Pickens; 9.5%; 10.7%; 11.3%
Anderson; 10.7%; 11.7%; 13.0%
Oconee; 10.9%; 12.0%; 13.9%
Spartanburg; 10.9%; 12.0%; 12.8%
Statewide; 11.0%; 11.1%; 12.2%

Source: SC Department of Employment and Workforce

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The Associated Press contributed to this story.