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## County job-loss pattern persists Nearly 15,000 positions gone since 2001

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Unemployment rose slightly in Lucas County last month, and metro Toledo remains on track to record its third-straight year of job losses.

The Ohio Department of Job & Family Services said yesterday that joblessness in the county rose to 7.2 percent in November from 7.1 percent in October. That was well above the state average of 6.5 percent and the national average of 5.4 percent.

Since the official end of the recession in November, 2001, Lucas County has shed 14,636 jobs or 6.5 percent of its work force. Comparing last month to November, 2001, 6 percent of Wood and Fulton counties' jobs have been lost. Only Ottawa County made gains over the period, rising 9 percent to 20,500 last month from 18,723 in November, 2001.

Lucas County's work force fell to its lowest monthly level in at least 10 years in January at 204,542. It recovered somewhat, rising to 210,254 in October, but then slipped slightly last month.

Statewide, the labor market has also suffered the last three years. Ohio had 126,900 fewer jobs in November than it did after the official end of the recession, according to the liberal think tank Policy Matters Ohio.

Research Director Zach Schiller said metro Toledo is likely being assaulted by the same forces as the overall state employment market.

"We've had an exceptionally weak recovery, and from an employment standpoint in Ohio, we've had virtually no recovery," he said. Since job losses statewide peaked in December, 2003, only 4,400 jobs have been added, he noted.

Factors contributing to the losses include the region's reliance on manufacturing, which has been slow to recover and hard hit by shutdowns and the shift of production overseas, according to economists.

Additionally, while economists say that the last recession began and ended in 2001, metro Toledo's work force actually reached a 10-year peak that year at 311,228.

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