

Orlando is pace car in state job growth Region led the way as state created 257,300 jobs

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With Orlando leading the way, Florida added more than a quarter-million jobs during the past year and kept its unemployment rate at a relatively low 4.5 percent in February, the state's labor office reported Friday.

Florida's jobless rate in February, based on preliminary surveys, was "nearly unchanged" from the revised January rate of 4.4 percent, said Susan Pareigis, director of the state's Agency for Workforce Innovation.

Meanwhile, the number of nonagricultural jobs in Florida grew by 3.5 percent from February 2004 to February 2005 — nearly double the national job growth rate of 1.8 percent over the same period.

Florida's job-growth rate translated into 257,300 new jobs statewide.

Metropolitan Orlando added 46,400 jobs during the 12 months ending in February. "Among the major metropolitan areas in the state, Orlando clearly has the most solid and best-performing labor market," said University of Central Florida economist David Scott.

Orlando not only added the most jobs among Florida's six largest metropolitan areas, Scott noted, it had the highest job-growth rate (4.9 percent) and the lowest unemployment rate (4.3 percent).

"That's a sterling performance," he said. "Last year at this time, when we compared February '04 to February '03, the [Orlando] jobs-growth number was 17,400, and we had a 1.9 percent growth rate."

Among the sectors that led employment growth statewide were professional and business services (84,600 new jobs); trade, transportation and utilities (34,600 new jobs); construction (33,500 new jobs); lei-

JOB GROWTH IN FLORIDA'S LARGEST METRO AREAS

Metro area rank & name	Employment change, Feb. '05 vs. Feb.'04	% change
1. Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater	+36,100	+2.9%
2. Miami-Miami Beach-Kendall*	+25,300	+2.5%
3. Orlando	+46,400	+4.9%
4. Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach*	+22,200	+3.1%
5. Jacksonville	+17,600	+3.1%
6. West Palm Beach-Boca Raton*	+19,600	+3.6%
7. Sarasota-Bradenton-Venice	+17,900	+6.1%
8. Cape Coral-Fort Myers	+9,700	+4.8%
9. Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville	+7,100	+3.5%
10. Lakeland	+6,700	+3.4%
Florida	+254,500	+3.4%

* Divisions within the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach metro area. Note: Florida data seasonally adjusted; metro-area data not seasonally adjusted. SOURCE: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation

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sure and hospitality (31,700 new jobs); and education and health services (29,100 new jobs).

"We've never stopped hiring this year," said Karen Dual, human resources director for the statewide accounting firm of Moore Stephens Lovelace.

"Usually, accounting firms stop hiring when the busy [tax] season starts, but now we're hiring year-round. Most of the recruiters I work with are very busy interviewing candidates," said Dual, who works in the company's Winter Park office.

"If we could just increase the population of accounting students, we'd be well off."

CENTRAL FLORIDA UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

	Feb. '05*	Jan. '05**	Feb. '04
Metro Orlando	4.3%	4.3%	4.6%
Lake	4.5	4.3	4.4
Orange	4.3	4.3	4.6
Osceola	4.5	4.6	4.9
Seminole	4.1	4.1	4.5
Brevard	4.2	4.1	4.4
Volusia	4.4	4.4	4.5
Polk	4.6	4.6	4.7
Florida	4.5	4.4	4.9
U.S.	5.4	5.2	5.6

Note: Florida and U.S. data seasonally adjusted; local data not seasonally adjusted.
*Preliminary figures. **Revised figures.
Source: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation