

DeKalb County unemployment rate falls to 6.4 percent

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By BRETT ROWLAND browland [@shawmedia.com](mailto:browland@shawmedia.com)

DeKALB – DeKalb County’s unemployment rate was 6.4 percent in January, down from 8.4 percent in January 2014, according to preliminary figures released Tuesday by the Illinois Department of Employment Security.

The county’s jobless rate, which identifies those who are out of work and seeking employment, stood at 5.5 percent in December. A person who exhausts or is ineligible for benefits will still be reflected in the unemployment figures, according to a news release from the state.

In the city of DeKalb, the unemployment rate fell to 6 percent in January, compared with 7.9 percent in January 2014.

At the end of January, the closure of the DeKalb General Electric plant left 94 employees out of work. It wasn’t immediately clear if the layoffs would impact February’s local unemployment figures.

In Kane County, the jobless rate was 6.9 percent in January, down from 9 percent in January 2014. In McHenry County, unemployment was 6.5 percent in January, compared with 8.3 percent in January 2014.

Statewide, the unemployment rate in January was 6.1 percent, slightly above the national rate of 5.7 percent for the same month.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security said unemployment was down year-over-year in January in each of the 14 metro areas the agency tracks in its monthly report. A year-over-year comparison is often the most telling because of the seasonal nature of unemployment.

The department said Tuesday that the biggest improvements came in Danville, Decatur and Rockford. All three historically manufacturing-dependent areas were struggling a year earlier with double-digit unemployment and all three saw drops of more than 3 percentage points.

Unemployment in the Chicago area fell 2 percentage points to 6.8 percent.

The Bloomington area had the state’s lowest unemployment at 5.4 percent. That was down from 6.7 percent in January 2014.

- The Associated Press contributed to this report.