

State has more open jobs than unemployed people

By MIKE ROGOWAY
The Oregonian

SALEM — Oregon employers had a notoriously difficult time filling jobs all last year.

Burger flippers, chipmakers, pipefitters, nurses. They were all in short supply.

New data out from the state helps explain why. Employers posted tens of thousands of job openings last year as the pandemic recession faded. At the same time, Oregon's unemploy-

ment rate plunged.

That created an unprecedented mismatch: By fall, the state had more job openings than people looking for work. It's the first time that's happened since at least 2013, when Oregon began conducting its quarterly job vacancy survey.

The most recent survey from the Oregon Employment Department found the state had about 103,000 job openings in October. That's actually slightly fewer than during the summer.

The state's labor squeeze didn't ease up at all, though, because unemployment was falling even faster. Oregon's jobless rate dropped to just 4.4% in October, near a historic low. It fell to 4.2% in November.

Layoffs spiked when the pandemic hit Oregon in the spring of 2020. At that time, when Oregon unemployment was at a record high, there were nearly six people on the jobless rolls for every open job.

By the fall of 2021,

though, the situation had reversed.

"There are now more job openings than there are unemployed people," said Gail Krumenauer, economist with the employment department.

The state had just 7 unemployed people for every 10 job openings. Oregon's experience mirrors what happened nationally.

"There's just simply not enough available workers for this record, or near-record, level of job openings,"

Krumenauer said. "This is head and shoulders above where we've been before."

The turnaround is testament to the speed and scale of the economic recovery. But the worker shortage created problems of its own.

Builders, factories, hotels, pubs and restaurants all struggled to meet customer demand for the simple reason they couldn't find enough workers. Hospitals, nursing homes and clinics have struggled to find staff, too.

Health care was the larg-

est category of job openings last fall, according to the employment department's survey, with about 28,000 vacancies. Construction, retail, manufacturing and hospitality jobs were next, each with around 10,000 openings.

The worker shortage produced a big spike in wages. The state's survey said vacant jobs were offering an average hourly wage of \$21.22, up about 14% from a year earlier — even after adjusting for inflation.

State on track for legal use of therapeutic psilocybin

By LIZZY ACKER
The Oregonian

SALEM — The state still has a lot of work to do, but it won't be too long before Oregonians 21 and over will be able to do something almost no one else in the country can do — take psychedelic mushrooms in a therapeutic setting.

Oregon is the first state in the nation to vote to legalize psilocybin, which researchers believe could help treat depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and addiction. And with a year to go before the implementation deadline, the Oregon Health Authority is working to develop a system to administer the psychedelic in therapeutic settings in the state.

According to Measure 109, approved by Oregon voters in November of 2020, the state has until Dec. 31, 2022, to set up the framework that will regulate legal magic mushrooms.

Officials say they are on track to meet that deadline.

The development phase for Measure 109 officially began Jan. 1, 2021. In March, the Oregon Psilocybin Services Advisory Board, appointed by Gov. Kate Brown, convened

for the first time.

In June, OHA brought on Angela Allbee to manage the newly-created Oregon Psilocybin Services Section.

Allbee's team is creating a training program, licensing, and compliance tracking and case management system, establishing a product tracking system, said OHA spokesperson Jonathan Modie, in accordance with Measure 109, as well as developing policy and procedure for the license and compliance programs.

While Allbee acknowledges the state is creating a program from scratch, she said they aren't without guides.

"Indigenous communities have practiced psilocybin use for centuries," she said, and the substance is legal in different places around the world.

As it works to create rules, Allbee said, the advisory board has reviewed scientific literature and invited a number of guest speakers with a wide array of information and expertise. They have held listening sessions and currently have a survey open on the section's website.

"Our board is advisory," Allbee said, which means they will submit recommendations to OHA.

Sale and use of misbranded weed killer halted

By GEORGE PLAVERN
Capital Press

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Agriculture is discontinuing the sale of a weed killer marketed as being organic but contains several unapproved ingredients.

The product in question, EcoMIGHT-Pro Weed & Grass Killer, is manufactured by EcoMIGHT LLC, a company based in Florida.

Tony Primbs, pesticides compliance manager for ODA, said the agency was contacted by a user in November who was concerned about whether the product's label was accurate.

Despite being sold as a 25(b) chemical — or "minimum risk" for public health and the environment — testing revealed the product contains the herbicide glyphosate and insecticides permethrin and bifenthrin, chemicals not included on the label.

The undeclared ingredients raise doubts over whether the product is suitable for organic farms, Primbs said. The label also lacked important safety and handling instructions.

ODA issued a Stop Sale or Removal Order on Jan.



Capital Bureau, File

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has issued a statewide stop sale, use or removal order for the product EcoMIGHT-Pro Weed & Grass Killer.

14. "Currently, we have an investigator trying to find out as many facts as we can," Primbs said.

Calls to EcoMIGHT were not returned. The company's website has been replaced by a message that states it has suspended

all operations as of July 31, 2021.

"Recent events have brought to light that we are no longer able to guarantee the quality of EcoMIGHT products," the message states. "To date, the manufacturer of EcoMIGHT has

not been able to assure us that the high level of quality we demand will be met."

Last year, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation issued a Stop Use Notice for two EcoMIGHT products, including EcoMIGHT-Pro and W.O.W. Whack Out Weeds! after testing showed they contained glyphosate, bifenthrin, permethrin, cypermethrin and carbaryl.

"It is imperative that we alert California organic growers that these EcoMIGHT products contain substances that are prohibited in organic production, in order to preserve the integrity of the California organic label and to protect our growers," California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross said in a statement.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also sent an advisory letter to EcoMIGHT CEO Michael Briansky warning the company may be in violation of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act by selling misbranded products, based on the California tests.

Violations of FIFRA are subject to a maximum fine of \$7,500 per violation.



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