

High unemployment threatens region

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

When David Dunham moved to Northern Nevada and started looking for work about seven years ago, it didn't feel as if companies were interviewing him. Instead, it felt like he was interviewing them. "Things were really good back then," Dunham said. "I basically had my pick of jobs to choose from."

With the job market as his proverbial oyster, Dunham decided to take a project manager position at Q&D Construction. It was a great job, Dunham said. Then, real estate's high-flying joyride crashed.

Five years after he started working for Q&D, the area's economic meltdown reduced Dunham to just another statistic. Dunham joined the growing ranks of Northern Nevada's unemployed in September 2009, as the private sector shed 1,500 jobs during that month alone in Reno-Sparks.

With construction continuing to hemorrhage jobs, and Dunham's prospects for employment growing dimmer, the former Fernley resident made a difficult decision. On December 2009, Dunham left for a job 1,700 miles away – in Austin, Texas.

"I really would have stayed if I could find a job there," a wistful-sounding Dunham said by phone. "But it was basically impossible. There really was no hope for me."

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