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May's Unemployment Rate Hits a 17 Year High for the Region

(MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, Fla.) – The unemployment rate in the South Florida Workforce Region (Miami-Dade and Monroe counties) jumped to 9.4 percent in May 2009, an increase of 4.2 percentage points from a year ago (5.2 percent). The unemployment rates of the two counties that comprise the South Florida Workforce Region during May 2009 were 9.6 percent in Miami-Dade County and 6.2 percent in Monroe County.

The unemployment rate in Miami-Dade County increased 4.3 percentage points over the year while the unemployment rate in Monroe County increased 2.8 percentage points. The May 2009 unemployment rate of 9.4 percent tied the record high for the month of May in the South Florida Workforce region. The area's rate was also 9.4 percent in May 1992.

Although total non-agricultural employment declined by 44,100 jobs over the year in the Miami-Miami Beach-Kendall metropolitan division, education and health services continues to be the industry sector that gained jobs over the year (+100 jobs) in the . Trade, transportation, and utilities (-9,900 jobs) lost the most jobs, followed by mining, logging, and construction (-9,600 jobs); professional and business services (-8,800 jobs); government (-3,400 jobs); manufacturing (-3,300 jobs); financial activities (-3,200 jobs); leisure and hospitality (-3,100 jobs); other services (-1,500 jobs); and information (-1,400 jobs).

“In spite of May's unemployment data and a continued trend upwards, we are strongly positioned compared to other counties in our state - we've acted here to cushion the residents of South Florida from the full effects of the downturn”, according to Rick Beasley, Executive Director of South Florida Workforce. “The region's workforce system provides a vast array of services including job placement, job training and re-employment assistance at 13 One-Stop Career Centers and 13 Access Points located throughout the Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties through the Employ Florida Marketplace, www.employflorida.com, which currently lists nearly 118,000 job opportunities.”

South Florida Workforce is currently administering \$21.8 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, which is having a tremendous impact on South Floridians in need of workforce development services. Federal Recovery funds currently being administered through SFW include the following:

- A Summer Youth Employment Program to provide summer employment and mentoring opportunities to 3,500 – 4,000 youth between the ages of 14 – 24;

- Partnered with Miami-Dade County's Department of Small Business Development to provide construction employment and training opportunities to residents of Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami's distressed neighborhoods;
- Developed a Career Pathways Initiative that will provide training to guaranteed employment in a number of industry sectors that include, but are not limited to healthcare, biotech, information technology and aviation;
- Funded an additional 50 positions to assist current Career Center Operators in their efforts to help job seekers with their training and employment services needs;
- Developed a re-training assistance initiative to provide reemployment services and retraining assistance to individuals permanently dislocated from their employment;
- Created the SFW Apprenticeship Program in partnership with various trade unions that will provide job seekers who experience barriers to skilled employment, with pre-vocational training, support and assistance to obtain and maintain a skilled trade apprenticeship;
- Created the Unemployment Recovery Center in partnership with the Agency for Workforce Innovation in order to provide residents with dedicated support and solutions to questions and issues related to Unemployment Compensation Benefits and create temporary employment opportunities in the process. Anyone who has filed an unemployment compensation claim can now call **305-513-7600** and receive competent local support.

In addition, the agency has established Access Points throughout the region to increase "universal access" to its Career Center system and engage Community and Faith Based Organizations as committed and active partners in the workforce investment system. The agency has also extended its traditional hours of operation from 8am to 7pm from Monday to Thursday, thereby allowing residents and clients expanded opportunities to access its Career Center services and resources.

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