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Growing Number Of Food Insecure On The Central Coast

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San Luis Obispo -- A new study on hunger from UCLA shows an increase in what's called "food insecurity" on the central coast at the peak of the recession.

Food insecurity, not knowing where your next meal is coming from, affects thousands of people across the central coast.

According to this new study from 2007 to 2009 the number of food insecure people grew statewide, at the height of the recession, by about 50-percent.



Local experts tell us they have seen an even greater need for assistance in recent years.

Carl Hansen with the San Luis Obispo County food bank coalition says, "In the last three years since 2009 our numbers have gone up 10-percent." Also he adds, the demographic Food Bank Coalition serves is changing.

Hansen says, "It's not just the homeless people, it's also people who have recently fallen into poverty who are hardworking families who just can't make a living."

The UCLA study shows 210-thousand people from Santa Cruz to Ventura are food insecure.

In San Luis Obispo County that's 23-percent of the population and 37-percent in Santa Barbara County.

Hansen says, "more people are accessing the food bank, we have increased from about 40-thousand people 2 years ago to 44-thousand, now that's a ten-percent increase, but it's a 100-percent increase from 2001."

Harvest bags are handed out at sites across the central coast, like Zion Lutheran Church on Foothill, where they've see an increase in need.

Many families are still feeling the effects of the recession, Hansen explains, "So many benefits have been cut back by employers who are trying to survive themselves, but also by the government, and for every dollar that is cut back on any social service people are going to have less money for food."

The San Luis Obispo County Food Bank Coalition has 50 distribution sites and works with more than 200 agencies in the county to fight hunger on the central coast.





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