

## **Madera Co. manufacturers chime in on economy**

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Manufacturers still face major challenges this year, among them being state and local regulations, according to a recent survey by the Madera County Economic Development Commission.

The survey compiled the answers of 44 companies in Madera and Chowchilla during the fourth quarter of 2009 and the first quarter of 2010 on their take of the how the recession has impacted industry and general business climate. Company sized ranged from 3 to 400 employees.

Surveyed companies reported that central location and proximity customer were the main factor for their location compared to a 2006 survey that listed workforce as the top reason. Real estate availability came in second while proximity to raw materials was third.

As far as relationship to local government, 57% of businesses cited a good or great relationship while 38% said relations were simply Ok. About 48% reported that business was difficult with too many California regulations, particularly **air quality** issues. Water restrictions were another top concern along with energy, workers' compensation and health care.

While some increases were experienced in the food processing sector, the survey showed a 2.2% drop in manufacturing employment due to a general drop in sales where 63% of surveyed businesses reported a decline since last year.

There was some optimism among the pack, however, as 61% of manufacturers had plans to expand or add new machinery in the coming year and 18% planned to hire more employees. Forty percent expected slow business growth in 2010 while 31% expected to remain the same as last year.

Many manufacturers mentioned green practices in the future with 22% considering solar energy, 27.5% looking into high efficiency lighting, 3% for equipment upgrades and 45% with plans to recycle their waste. Ten percent were already using recycled materials.