

## Unemployment: Through his eyes

*By Kristina Barry*

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At the nation's number 1 rocket engine provider, there is now one less employee working to keep people from blowing themselves up.

49 year-old John Adams was an independent consultant for Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne in San Jose, CA. He worked for three years doing safety audits associated with the shut-down of the rocket engine facility. His main goal was to keep people safe in the workplace, and to teach employees about how to avoid hazards of all kinds.

Unfortunately, in March of last year, Adams was let go when his contract was fulfilled early. Since he worked on contract, Adams like many others across the U.S. did not qualify for unemployment benefits.

As a divorced father of four, it is nearly impossible to live off of no income. "I am facing the possibility of having to sell my house and live out of my car if I don't acquire a job in a timely manner." According to the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, this reality is not uncommon. They have reported that the 2010 homelessness rate has increased by 7% since the beginning of 2009; most likely a result from the downturn of the economy.

Known as the former top safety auditor for Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne, John was given 6 months notice of his unemployment, which in his eyes, was "plenty of notice." Obama stated in his healthcare speech on March 4, 2010, that the average unemployment period for Americans is 30.2 weeks. But for someone without any benefits, that could seem like an eternity.

The pressure for finding a job in this economy can truly take a toll on one's enthusiasm. "Since I have been out of work for almost a year, some of my confidence has waned," states the California native.

One of the fastest growing trends in the interviewing process is the phone interview. Although this saves costs for the hiring company, it presents a new challenge for job seekers. "I find it a little less personal than I would prefer," states Adams, "you can't read people when they are on the phone, so it is difficult to measure your success when answering the questions they ask." Since this type of interview process is becoming more popular, it could play a major part in the reason 14.9 million Americans are still unemployed.

John has been continuously looking for work since notice of his unemployment was given. Within the past year, Adams has been forced to apply for jobs outside his main career focus. "I am currently looking in safety, environmental health & safety, and environmental consulting, though I have also applied for jobs in geology and facilities management." This is the same situation those 14.9 million unemployed people are facing; having to take a job in a different field.

According to the CNN United States Economy Tracker, unemployment rates have been slowly decreasing since October of 2009. We are now at a national percentage of 9.7. Though this is lower than our national high of 10.2%, it doesn't make finding work any easier.

While looking for a job has taken a toll on Adam's self esteem, it has allowed him to go after another one of his passions, writing children's novels. "I have written a few, but have been unsuccessful in publishing the ones I have so far. Mostly I have shared them with my own children." Although finding work in this economy is quite a challenge, it also gives people the chance to evaluate their lives, make new decisions, and potentially follow their dreams.