

March new-home permits fall 19.5 percent from February

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Construction of new single-family houses slowed in the San Jose metropolitan area in March compared with February, a home builders trade group said Thursday.

Builders in Santa Clara and San Benito counties - which make up the San Jose metro area as defined by the federal government - took out permits to build 198 houses in March. That's 19.5 percent fewer than in February, according to the California Building Industry Association, but 20.7 percent more than in March 2006. The unseasonable decline in permits between February and March is "troubling on its face, but I'm not ready to say this is going to be a trend," said Joseph Perkins, president of the Home Builders Association of Northern California.

Anecdotal information says San Jose-area builders have stepped up their construction pace a bit, so it's possible that the metro-area figures are being tugged down by slower construction in San Benito County, Perkins said.

For more information and more counties' data, visit www.cbia.org and click on "newsroom."