

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY GAINS 17,000 JOBS IN DECEMBER



The month of December saw an increase in jobs within the construction industry, as 17,000 jobs were added. There were major gains in the nonresidential construction sector, according to a report released by the Associated General Contractors of America. Officials from the Association claim that employment in construction benefited from unseasonably warm temperatures all over the country, something that extended the construction season for most. "Nonresidential construction is clearly driving last month's employment gains," said Ken Simonson, the association's chief economist. "But it is too early to tell whether those gains came because the weather was good enough for crews to keep working well into December or because demand is truly rebounding." The total number of construction employment now stands at 5,544,000, which is good for 0.3 percent higher than a month earlier. The number is also 46,000 (0.8 percent) higher than in the month of December from the year 2010. Simonson also said that the most recent employment data continues months-long trends of small gains followed by small losses in employment in the construction industry. He then said that the employment for the construction industry is still below its peak numbers of 7,726,000, which was hit in April of 2006. There were 17,200 construction jobs added in the nonresidential construction sector for the month of December. Simonson said that there were 20,200 jobs added in the nonresidential specialty trade sector. Heavy and civil engineering construction firms, which are responsible for publicly funded construction, lost 300 jobs. There were 2,700 jobs shed in the nonresidential building sector in the month of December while residential construction lost 400 jobs as 2,900 jobs were lost in the residential specialty trade sector. Residential builders added 2,500 jobs in the month of December. Officials from the Association say that the added jobs in December was welcome news but they also said that they are still concerned over partisan fighting in Washington. They are concerned that the partisan fighting could prevent overdue infrastructure projects that would help boost the economy. If these measures are not put into action then the construction industry surely will struggle when it comes to employment numbers. "It is going to be hard to pass tax and investment measures to help boost private sector demand when congress and the president are at odds about everything from appointments, to how to curb growing federal deficits," said Stephen E. Sandherr, the association's chief executive officer. "When elected officials are more interested in scoring political points than addressing our critical infrastructure needs, everybody else – including unemployed construction workers and the economy – suffers."

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