

WILL HURRICANE SANDY POSTPONE JOBS REPORT? ECONOMISTS PREDICT 120,000 NEW JOBS AND 7.9 PERCENT UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Even though the Labor Department officials are optimistic that they will release the October Jobs Report on time, hurricane Sandy could make schedules go haywire. The report is forthcoming at 8:30 a.m. in Washington on the second of November. Jennifer Kaplan, spokeswoman for the department was affirmative saying, "Our intention is that Friday will be business as usual regarding the October employment . . . report." The reports are practically ready, as statistical data is processed and kept ready well in advance. The department has assured that the data will not be affected as the surveys of employers and households' upon which the report is based was conducted in the middle of the month, when there were no storm disruptions. The only thing that could delay the report is if the government stays closed owing to the storm. Federal government agencies in Washington stayed shuttered for the second consecutive day. However, the US Office of Personnel Management posted a message on its website that they were reopening tomorrow. Considering that the report is a mere four days before Election Day its value cannot be underestimated. The report, the concluding one prior to the elections, will give voters a final guide map to decide whether claims of job growth are valid or unfounded? It could help them decide whether the results were enough to give President Obama another four years or let a new President take his place. It could also provide the last chance for the undecided voters to take a stance. Jerry Webman, chief economist at OppenheimerFunds, says that the job report evokes a lot of debate and discussion and "the coverage and discussion around an especially strong or especially weak [jobs] number may push the remaining undecided voters to make up their minds one way or another." The reports have shown two years of slow but certain growth which the Democrats claim is a result of their efforts and a sign of better things to come, whilst the Republicans say that's far too slow and things could have been, or should have been faster. The last report showed the unemployment rate falling below 8 for the first time in three years. Ever since the President has assumed office, the rate has never fallen below 8. Analysts forecast that the report will show a marginal increase from September's 7.8 to 7.9 percent. If the October report is favorable to the President as it promises to be, it is apprehended the anti-Democrat camps may allege that the data is not all correct and that the hurricane had wiped out the data and that it was based on assumption and hypothesis in spite of the department's assurance that the data is safe and secure. It would be pertinent to recollect when the September unemployment rate, contrary to popular expectations fell below 8, Jack Welch, the former chief executive officer of General Electric Co., said he suspected the Obama administration had stage-managed the data for political advantage. His statement was roundly criticized and called irresponsible and reckless. The job statistics are stacked against the President as Ronald Reagan is the only President to have been re-elected, since the Second World War with a poor unemployment rate. When he was elected the rate was 7.2 percent. Obama faces a tougher task with the bar having been raised to 7.9 percent, he will have to make a higher jump to leap across the bar. The hurricane has seen Obama totally aborting his election campaign and Romney curtailing it greatly, which adds further significance to the job report. With job analysts saying that 120,000 new jobs could have been created in October, voters could be swayed either way.