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Construction industry still suffering

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JASON BEAN/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL
an, left, and Thomas Pye work on a staircase Thursday at
adquarters. The local industry has lost 29,800 jobs in 12

BY HUBBLE SMITH
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

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California lost the most construction jobs in the 12-month period through January while Nevada led the nation with the largest percentage decrease in construction employment, the Associated General Contractors of America reported.

Thirty-eight states showed double-digit declines in construction employment, with Nevada leading at 29.9 percent, or 29,800

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jobs, the Wash [redacted] D.C.-based industry group reported Wednesday. Arizona was next at 26 percent, followed by Colorado at 22.2 percent and Idaho at 21 percent.

"Construction employment is dropping everywhere and plummeting almost everywhere," AGC chief economist Ken Simonson said. "Looking at this data, it is quite clear that the construction industry has yet to hit bottom."

California lost 128,700 construction jobs over the past 12 months, an 18 percent decline, while Texas lost 95,600 jobs (down 14.7 percent) and Florida lost 90,700 jobs (down 20.4 percent).

North Dakota had the smallest decline (1 percent) in construction employment.

Simonson noted that 31 states lost construction jobs between December and January. Weather can heavily affect month-to-month employment figures, he added.

The construction industry continues to bear the brunt of the economic downturn in Southern Nevada, where total employment fell 27.2 percent in 2009. High vacancy rates in all commercial markets, along with an excess inventory of new homes built over the last several years, have brought new construction to almost a standstill in Las Vegas.

The trailing 12-month total for commercial building permits in Southern Nevada has fallen from a peak of 1,600 in 2006 to slightly more than 200 in 2009. Residential permits fell from more than 40,000 to about 5,000 during the same period.

Stephen Miller, chairman of the economics department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, said seasonally adjusted construction employment has fallen from a peak of 109,000 in early 2006 to 63,000, about where it was before the run-up in 2001.

"We added a lot of rooms and it turns out that was not a great decision," Miller said. "I think we're getting near the bottom. Permit data can't go below zero, right? It's been bouncing around the bottom for four months. It's unlikely we'll repeat what we saw in the last decade."

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With some trade groups reporting unemployment rates of 50 percent, Nevada's construction industry accounts for a third of all displaced workers receiving unemployment



Nevada's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 13.1 percent in January, compared with 9.6 percent a year ago. Construction employment sank 28.7 percent from January 2009, natural resources and mining is down 6 percent and manufacturing is down 10.8 percent, the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation reported.

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Second-quarter hiring prospects for Las Vegas remain among the weakest in the nation, Manpower's quarterly Employment Outlook Survey found. Only 13 percent of companies surveyed plan to hire more workers from April to June, while 19 percent expect to reduce their payrolls. Sixty-one percent will stay the same.

Job prospects appear best in manufacturing and professional and business services, the survey said. Industries that are shedding staffs include construction, transportation and warehousing, and retail trade, financial services and government. Leisure and hospitality hiring is expected to remain unchanged.

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AGC officials in Washington are urging the Senate to extend extension to the nation's surface transportation program to accelerate stimulus-funded construction projects.



"As privately funded construction activity continues to decline, federal investments in infrastructure are often the only source of jobs between a job and unemployment for what's left of the industry," Simonson said.

Contact reporter Hubble Smith at hsmith@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0491.

Construction employment

State	January 09	January 10	% change	Jobs lost
Nevada	99,500	69,700	-29.9	29,800
Arizona	154,800	114,500	-26.0	40,300
Colorado	149,300	116,100	-22.2	33,200
Idaho	39,000	30,800	-21.0	8,200
Florida	443,800	353,100	-20.4	90,700
Oregon	82,300	66,400	-19.3	15,900
Washington	180,400	146,000	-19.1	34,400
Kentucky	79,100	64,200	-18.8	14,900
Missouri	127,200	103,700	-18.5	23,500
California	713,400	584,700	-18.0	128,700

Source: Associated General Contractors of America

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wettap wrote on *March 16, 2010 02:54 PM:*

Why would any reasonable employer be looking to hire anyone?
Obama has not hidden his desire to punish America's achievers. He views business as the enemy.

What employer will go out on a limb in that sort of climate?

[http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?
pid=20601087&sid=aXaMufRb.FA0](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aXaMufRb.FA0)

Unemployment isn't going to end soon. So the sooner we rid ourselves of the Socialist Utopians who are keeping America jobless, the better.

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Don Best wrote on *March 13, 2010 11:20 AM:*

Many of our recent job seekers from down South will remain, however. It's better here than there. Plus there is no admission charge to attend our sorry local schools. Oh well, at least they want to work. Maybe people should think about having less children.

Easy to make 'em, a lot harder to raise them.

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jimbojones wrote on *March 13, 2010 09:02 AM:*

I, for one, am glad. Most of the construction workers are recent transplants. Maybe they'll go back to wherever they came from.

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TONY wrote on *March 13, 2010 06:43 AM:*

THINGS WILL BE DOWN FOR QUITE AWHILE
THE UNIONS WILL NEED TO HELP OUT
IF NOT THE GOODMAN PLAN COMES INTO PLAY

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