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**CONSTRUCTION UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HITS 27.1 PERCENT AS ANOTHER 64,000
CONSTRUCTION WORKERS LOST JOBS IN FEBRUARY 2010**

*With Nearly 2 Million Construction Jobs Lost Since December 2007, Construction Sector Continues to Drag
Down Overall Employment Figures*

The construction unemployment rate jumped to 27.1 percent and construction employment dropped to a 14-year low as another 64,000 construction workers lost jobs in February, according to federal employment figures released today. The economy would have added jobs for the third time in four months had it not been for the declines in construction employment, the Associated General Contractors of America noted.

“While the broader economy may be recovering, the construction industry continues to decline at an alarming rate,” said Ken Simonson, the association’s chief economist. “If these trends don’t change soon, millions of American families will continue to suffer.”

Simonson noted that industry’s job losses in February were consistent with the prior six months and not mainly attributable to exceptionally bad weather. He added that construction unemployment is at the highest level recorded since the federal government began making the data available in 1976. And he noted that nonresidential construction experienced significantly more job losses than the residential sector in February, 53,500 jobs lost versus 10,600.

Overall declines in construction activity, however, have cost 2.2 million construction workers their jobs since industry employment peaked in June 2006, a 28 percent drop, Simonson noted. Construction has accounted for 1,936,000 of the 8,425,000 nonfarm payroll job losses since the recession began in December 2007, or 23 percent of the total, even though the industry employs only 4.3 percent of all workers, he added.

The construction economist noted that job losses appeared widespread across construction sectors, with nonresidential specialty trade contractors experiencing the largest monthly decline of 1.7 percent. He noted that even heavy and civil engineering construction, the sector most likely to be boosted by stimulus funded projects, experienced a 1.1 percent monthly employment decline.

“The industry has gone from being a symptom of our economic problems to a victim of them,” said Stephen E. Sandherr, the association’s chief executive officer. He noted that while the current Jobs Bill prevents declines in federal highway funding, it does little to boost overall infrastructure investments. “Until we see meaningful increases in demand for new infrastructure and private sector construction projects, our economy will continue to suffer.”

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