CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT INCREASES IN 34 STATES AND D.C. FROM DECEMBER 2018 TO DECEMBER 2019, WHILE 29 STATES ADDED CONSTRUCTION JOBS LAST MONTH

Texas and Maine Have Biggest Number and Percent of Annual Job Gains, Ohio and Wyoming Have Largest Annual Losses; Texas and Iowa Have Largest Monthly Gains While Nevada and West Virginia Have Largest Monthly Declines

Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia added construction jobs between December 2018 and December 2019, while construction employment increased in 29 states from November to December, according to an analysis by the Associated General Contractors of America of Labor Department data released today. Association officials added that most contractors expect to continue adding to their payrolls in 2020, according to the results of the association’s annual construction forecast.

“Construction employment consistently expanded in at least two-thirds of the states throughout 2019, even though contractors reported difficulty in finding qualified workers all year long,” said Ken Simonson, the association’s chief economist. “As long as they are able to continue finding qualified workers, most firms expect to continue hiring this year.”

Texas added the most construction jobs in 2019 (55,900 jobs, 7.4 percent), followed by California (31,300 jobs, 3.6 percent) and Florida (25,500 jobs, 4.6 percent). Maine added the highest percentage of construction jobs (11.5 percent, 3,100 jobs) since last December, followed by New Mexico (10.8 percent, 5,100 jobs) and Utah (8.6 percent, 9,000 jobs). Construction employment reached a record high in Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington.

Sixteen states shed construction jobs in 2019. Ohio lost the largest number of construction jobs (-9,000 jobs, -4.0 percent). Other states with large job losses include Louisiana (-7,000 jobs, -4.8 percent) and Minnesota (-3,600 jobs, -2.8 percent). Wyoming lost the highest percentage of construction jobs during the past twelve months (-9.5 percent, -2,100 jobs). Other states with large percentage losses include West Virginia (-7.2 percent, -3,400 jobs) and Connecticut (-5.5 percent, -3,400 jobs).

Texas added the most construction jobs between November and December (3,800 jobs, 0.5 percent), followed by Ohio (3,400 jobs, 1.6 percent), Florida (3,100 jobs, 0.5 percent), Arizona (1,600 jobs, 0.9 percent) and Iowa (1,500 jobs, 1.9 percent). Iowa added the highest percentage of construction jobs, followed by North Dakota (1.8 percent, 500 jobs) and Ohio.

Construction employment decreased from November to December in 16 states and the District of Columbia and was unchanged in five other states. Nevada lost the largest number of construction jobs (-2,700 jobs, -2.6 percent), followed by West Virginia (-1,600 jobs, -3.5 percent) and Pennsylvania (-1,600 jobs, -0.6 percent). West Virginia also had the largest percentage decline for the month, followed by Nevada and Wyoming (-1.5 percent, -300 jobs).

Association officials noted that contractors appear optimistic about demand for all types of commercial construction in 2020, based on the results of the 2020 Construction Hiring and Business Outlook the association prepared with Sage. But they cautioned that 81 percent of firms report they are having a hard time finding qualified workers to hire. They urged government officials to boost funding for career and technical education, open new high school-level construction skills programs and allow more people with construction skills to legally enter the country to allow payrolls to continue to expand.

“While there appears to be plenty of demand for work this year, it is not certain there will be enough workers,” said Stephen E. Sandherr, the association’s chief executive officer. “Public officials can help more people start high-paying construction careers by simply exposing more young adults to the industry and allowing more workers into the country.”

View the state employment data by 1- and 12-month rank and state map. View the 2020 Construction Outlook Survey.