



PAMCANI

PLUMBING AND MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS AUTHORITY OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS
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Bi-WEEKLY PUBLICATION
**News
DROPS** \$
News updates on our industry, our economy, our recovery

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Unemployment Numbers—Total U.S. employment fell by another 663,000 net jobs during March, matching economists' consensus view. February's previously reported loss of 651,000 jobs was not revised. However, January's previously reported loss of 655,000 jobs lost was revised to show a loss of 741,000 jobs during the month—the worst month for job losses in 59 years. The American economy has now lost 5.1 million jobs since the U.S. recession officially began in December 2007. Nearly two-thirds of the job losses have occurred during the past five months alone. The nation's unemployment rate increased from 8.1% in February to 8.5% in March, the highest level in 25 years. By comparison, the jobless rate was 5.1% just one year ago. The jobless rate averaged 4.6% in 2006 and 2007 and 5.8% during 2008. (www.thredgold.com, April 8, 2009)

Help for Job Hunters is Close to Home—The AFL-CIO and Working America launched a new website this week—**www.UnemploymentLifeLine.com**—that can provide job-search and job-retraining resources near you. The service is not just for union members, but also for anyone who's looking for work. The sponsoring organizations call the website "a Yellow Pages meets Wikipedia" for the unemployed. When you enter a zip code, a host of nearby agencies and services pop up. Listings include where to go to: sign up for unemployment insurance, find food pantries, get help to pay your utility bills, get credit counseling, find job-training programs, and more. A unique feature of **www.UnemploymentLifeLine.com** is the "Talk With Others" section where people can ask questions and give advice to others about resources. (Freep.com, April 7, 2009)

Stimulus Aid Being Distributed, Slowly—The \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—better known as the economic stimulus package—is beginning to be dispersed nationwide, six weeks after President Obama signed the legislation. Some of the money is arriving quickly, and in big chunks. The country's 1,100 community health clinics have received \$337 million to help them handle the surge of newly unemployed and uninsured people needing care. In most cases, though, the money is working its way into the system far more gradually. Officials must meet not only existing guidelines for programs receiving aid but also reporting requirements that have been added to ensure that stimulus funding is spent as intended and to account for the jobs it creates. With more than 100 funding streams contained in the package, many officials find themselves having to file applications for several programs at a time, helping explain why much of the money is still months away from being spent. White House officials say the bulk of the money will start hitting the streets later this year and early next year, with the goal of spending 70% of it by the summer of 2010. As of April 7, \$54 billion from the package had been "obligated," meaning that states, cities or other recipients could begin drawing from it, and \$11.7 billion of that had been disbursed. (Washington Post, April 10, 2009)

Good to Know—Economists have pointed out some positive economic statistics in housing, manufacturing, and retail sales in recent weeks to suggest that the U.S. economy may be stabilizing. Economists are forecasting a return to marginally positive U.S. economic growth during the second half of 2009. (www.thredgold.com, April 8, 2009)

A Little Extra in Each Paycheck—Starting in April, workers will be getting small additions to their paychecks, thanks to the stimulus package "Making Work Pay" tax credit. The fatter paychecks will continue through 2010—totaling up to \$400 a year for working individuals, and \$800 a year for married joint filers. The tax credit is smaller for those earning \$75,000 or more (or \$150,000 for couples filing jointly), and it's zero for those earning more than \$95,000 (or \$190,000 for couples filing jointly). The IRS says there's a good chance you're not withholding enough and you may owe money when tax season rolls around next year if: you have multiple jobs; a working spouse; income that isn't subject to withholding (such as capital gains or rental income); or you owe other taxes (like self-employment tax.). If you receive social security payments or pension benefits, then you'll get a \$250 payment this spring, not the yearlong tax credit. (U.S. News & World Report, March 31, 2009)

Outlook on Economy is Brightening—Americans have grown more optimistic about the economy and the direction of the country in the 11 weeks since President Obama was inaugurated, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News poll. The percentage of people who said the economy was getting worse has declined from 54% just before President Obama took office to 34% today. And 20% now think the economy is getting better, compared with 7% in mid-January. The poll found that 70% of respondents were very or somewhat concerned that someone in their household would be out of work and looking for a job in the next 12 months. Forty percent said they had cut spending on luxuries, and 10% said they had cut back on necessities; 31% said they had cut both. (*New York Times*, April 6, 2009)

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