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CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT SHRINKS OR STAGNATES IN ONE-THIRD OF METRO AREAS BETWEEN JULY 2015 AND JULY 2016 DESPITE WIDESPREAD JOB OPENINGS

Louisville/Jefferson County, Ky.-Ind. and Bloomington, Ill. Have Largest Declines as New Survey Shows Contractors Struggle to Fill Openings; Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, Colo., Boise, Idaho Top Growth List

Construction employment decreased or stagnated in 119, or one-third, of 358 metro areas between July 2015 and July 2016 despite a strong overall increase in demand for construction, according to a new analysis of federal employment data released today by the Associated General Contractors of America. The report coincides with the association's release of its latest construction [workforce survey](#), which showed many firms are struggling to find qualified craft workers.

"Together, the metro employment report and the survey indicate that more contractors would be adding to their headcount if they could find the workers they need," said Ken Simonson, the association's chief economist. "In recent months, job openings have been at a 10-year high but hiring has stalled in many parts of the country. That mismatch is consistent with our survey, in which two-thirds of the respondents said their firms were having a hard time filling hourly craft positions and more than one-third were having trouble filling salaried positions."

Construction employment declined in 60 metro areas in the past year, held steady in 59 areas, and rose in 239 areas. The largest job losses from July 2015 to July 2016 were in Louisville/Jefferson County, Ky.-Ind. (-1,900 jobs, -6 percent), followed by New Orleans-Metairie, La. (-1,400 jobs, -4 percent), Birmingham-Hoover, Ala. (-1,300 jobs, -5 percent) and Anchorage, Alaska (-1,100 jobs, -9 percent). The largest percentage declines for the past year were in Bloomington, Ill. (-16 percent, -500 jobs); Lawton, Okla. (-15 percent, -300 jobs); Dothan, Ala. (-14 percent, -400 jobs); and Rocky Mount, N.C. (-13 percent, -300 jobs). Eighteen metro areas recorded their lowest July totals since the series began in 1990.

In two-thirds of the metro areas for which the government publishes construction employment data, contractors added to their head9 (nt)-32(eM)6.5 (i T(a)-0.9 (t)-3.6n)-9.5 (mp, A)3.2 eiehe my]TJ 0 Tw 10.43(e)6.5 (t