

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**JOBS REPORT UNDERSCORES URGENCY OF INFRASTRUCTURE STIMULUS,
AGC SAYS**

Construction Jobless Rate Soars; States Could Quickly Put Many Back to Work, Economist
Simonson States

Washington, D.C.--"Today's unemployment report--grim reading on all counts--is especially bad for construction and shows the urgency of enacting infrastructure spending as part of a stimulus bill," Ken Simonson, Chief Economist for The Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), said today following a Bureau of Labor Statistics report that showed the unemployment rate for construction workers jumped to 10.8 percent last month.

"Construction had--by far--the highest unemployment rate of any industry and the largest increase, up from 6.1 percent a year ago," Simonson noted. "The industry accounted for nearly half of the million-plus jobs lost throughout the economy in the past 12 months.

"Many of those losses have been in heavy and civil engineering construction--highways and other public works," Simonson observed. "Those workers could quickly be re-employed if the states had enough money to award contracts for projects they have ready to go. Contrary to some assertions, this money would quickly make its way into the economy, supporting equipment and materials manufacturing and services jobs as well as construction. State officials say they have thousands of projects ready to award without long delays.

"AGC urges Congress to act this month on a stimulus package that includes funding for highway, bridge and other infrastructure work," Simonson stated. "In addition, the new Administration and Congress should give a high priority to renewing long-term highway, airport, water and wastewater funding bills next year.

"This is a great time for both public agencies and private owners to go ahead with construction," Simonson concluded. "Many materials costs have tumbled since last summer, and there are plenty of skilled contractors ready to bid for work."

The Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) is the largest and oldest national construction trade association in the United States. AGC represents more than 33,000 firms, including 7,500 of America's leading general contractors, and over 12,500 specialty-contracting firms. More than 13,000 service providers and suppliers are associated with AGC through a nationwide network of chapters. Visit the AGC Web site at www.agc.org.