



THE ASSOCIATION OF CHOICE FOR THE SECONDARY WOOD PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

# WPMANEWS

November 2025

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT



### A&M HARDWOODS

A&M Hardwoods: A Legacy of Quality and Commitment to Excellence

Headquartered in Dundee, Ohio, A&M Hardwoods has earned a reputation as a trusted leader in hardwood distribution. Since its founding in 2009, the company has built its success on a foundation of quality, service, and integrity. Purchasing more than 20 million board feet of domestic hardwood lumber annually, A&M specializes in a wide range of species including Red and White Oak, Maple, Cherry, Poplar, and Walnut. With four locations across Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, the company serves customers of all sizes—offering efficiency, reliability, and precision on every order. Beyond hardwood lumber, A&M provides sheet goods, value-added services, and custom moulding production, including cut-to-size and rip services tailored to meet the needs of furniture and cabinet makers, contractors, and commercial clients. Every shipment is visually inspected and graded using a state-of-the-art grading line, ensuring only the finest lumber reaches customers.

To support continued growth, A&M is investing in its operations with new technology and expanded facilities. A 20,000-square-foot addition at the Dundee location will house advanced equipment including a USNR scanner and dual Ultimizer chop saws, increasing cut-to-length production capacity from two to eight truckloads per week. The company's total warehouse footprint will expand from 130,000 to 178,000 square feet by the end of 2025.

A&M Hardwoods also takes pride in its commitment to sustainability, partnering with mills that practice responsible forestry management.

Contact: Dave Kuehl Email: [dkuehl@amhardwoods.com](mailto:dkuehl@amhardwoods.com) Phone: 608-790-2151



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# Manufacturing PMI at 49.1%, wood and furniture products decline overall

Original Source: By Dakota Smith

TEMPE, Ariz. – Economic activity in the manufacturing sector contracted in September for the seventh consecutive month, following a two-month expansion preceded by 26 straight months of contraction, say the nation’s supply executives in the latest [ISM Manufacturing PMI Report](#).

The report was issued today by Susan Spence, MBA, chair of the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) Manufacturing Business Survey Committee.

“The Manufacturing PMI registered 49.1 percent in September, a 0.4-percentage point increase compared to the reading of 48.7 percent recorded in August. The overall economy continued in expansion for the 65th month after one month of contraction in April 2020. (A Manufacturing PMI above 42.3 percent, over a period of time, generally indicates an expansion of the overall economy.) The New Orders Index contracted in September following one month of growth; the figure of 48.9 percent is 2.5 percentage points lower than the 51.4 percent recorded in August. The September reading of the Production Index (51 percent) is 3.2 percentage points higher than August’s figure of 47.8 percent. The Prices Index remained in expansion (or ‘increasing’ territory), registering 61.9 percent, down 1.8 percentage points compared to the reading of 63.7 percent reported in August. The Backlog of Orders Index registered 46.2 percent, up 1.5 percentage points compared to the 44.7 percent recorded in August. The Employment Index registered 45.3 percent, up 1.5 percentage points from August’s figure of 43.8 percent.”

Spence continues, “In September, U.S. manufacturing activity contracted at a slightly slower rate, with production growth the biggest factor in the 0.4-percentage point gain of the Manufacturing PMI. However, the combined drops in the New Orders and Inventories indexes (4.2 percentage points) exceeded the increase in the Production Index (3.2), rendering the Manufacturing PMI improvement negligible. Last month’s increase in new orders (an index gain of 4.3 percentage points from July to August) seems to have flowed through to production but does not appear to be sustainable given the subsequent drop in new orders in September.

“One of the four demand indicators improved, with the Backlog of Orders Index showing a gain of 1.5 percentage points (which could be due to August’s increase in new orders, cited above), while the New Orders, New Export Orders, and Customers’ Inventories indexes contracted at faster rates. A ‘too low’ status for the Customers’ Inventories Index is usually considered positive for future production.

“Regarding output, the Production and Employment indexes improved, though 64 percent of panelists’ comments still indicated that managing head count is still the norm at their companies, as opposed to hiring.

“Finally, inputs (defined as supplier deliveries, inventories, prices, and imports), on net, moved further into contraction territory. The Supplier Deliveries Index indicated slower deliveries, the Inventories Index worsened, and the Prices Index continued to increase, but at a slower rate. The Imports Index moved further into contraction.

“Looking at the manufacturing economy, 67 percent of the sector’s gross domestic product (GDP) contracted in September, down from 69 percent in August. Twenty-eight percent of GDP is strongly contracting (registering a composite PMI of 45 percent or lower), up from 4 percent in August. The share of sector GDP with a PMI at or below 45 percent is a good metric to gauge overall manufacturing weakness. Of the six largest manufacturing industries, only one (Petroleum & Coal Products) expanded in September, compared to two in August,” says Spence.

The five manufacturing industries reporting growth in September are: Petroleum & Coal Products; Primary Metals; Textile Mills; Fabricated Metal Products; and Miscellaneous Manufacturing. The 11 industries reporting contraction in September – in the following order – are: Wood Products; Apparel, Leather & Allied Products; Plastics & Rubber Products; Paper Products; Furniture & Related Products; Chemical Products; Electrical Equipment, Appliances & Components; Transportation Equipment; Nonmetallic Mineral Products; Machinery; and Computer & Electronic Products.

To read the full report, visit [ismworld.org](http://ismworld.org).

MANUFACTURING AT A GLANCE						
September 2025						
Index	Series Index Sep	Series Index Aug	Percentage Point Change	Direction	Rate of Change	Trend* (Months)
Manufacturing PMI®	49.1	48.7	+0.4	Contracting	Slower	7
New Orders	48.9	51.4	-2.5	Contracting	From Growing	1
Production	51.0	47.8	+3.2	Growing	From Contracting	1
Employment	45.3	43.8	+1.5	Contracting	Slower	8
Supplier Deliveries	52.6	51.3	+1.3	Slowing	Faster	2
Inventories	47.7	49.4	-1.7	Contracting	Faster	5
Customers' Inventories	43.7	44.6	-0.9	Too Low	Faster	12
Prices	61.9	63.7	-1.8	Increasing	Slower	12
Backlog of Orders	46.2	44.7	+1.5	Contracting	Slower	36
New Export Orders	43.0	47.6	-4.6	Contracting	Faster	7
Imports	44.7	46.0	-1.3	Contracting	Faster	6
OVERALL ECONOMY				Growing	Faster	65
Manufacturing Sector				Contracting	Slower	7

Executives from different U.S. manufacturing industries that took part in this survey stated tariffs were the main reason for their contraction or growth in overall manufacturing.

“Customer orders are depressed for heavy machinery because tariffs are so impactful to high-end capital equipment. Revenue expectations are flat for the rest of 2025, with no outlook to improve in 2026,” says an Electrical Equipment, Appliances & Components respondent.

# US Lumber Prices Crash by 24%

Original Source: <https://forestmachinemagazine.com/us-lumber-prices-crash-by-24/>

US Lumber Prices Crash- Wood markets have been whipsawed of late by trade uncertainty and a deteriorating housing market. Futures have dropped 24% since hitting a three-year high at the beginning of August and ended in September at \$526.50 per thousand board feet. The price drop might have been greater but two of North America's biggest sawyers said last week that they would curtail output, slowing the decline.

Crashing wood prices are troubling because they have been a reliable leading indicator on the direction of the housing market as well as broader economic activity.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, two-by-four prices nearly tripled the prepandemic record, an early sign of the inflation and broken supply chains that would bedevil the economic reopening. When the Federal Reserve began raising interest rates in 2022 to curb inflation, lumber was among the first assets to decline in value. Now, prices are signalling caution again.

A glut of lumber was piled up stateside earlier this year in anticipation of higher duties on Canadian imports and additional tariffs on wood threatened by President Trump.

Lumber prices have been on a roller coaster. They rose in the spring after the White House said it was investigating national security aspects of imported lumber and Trump threatened steep tariffs on all Canadian goods.

They crashed when he backed off Canada. In May, they started surging again as buyers began stocking up ahead of the scheduled hike in existing Canadian lumber duties and Trump's threatened tariffs.

Stinson Dean, a former lumber trader and co-founder of Indiana truss manufacturer Revol Building Solutions, said buyers were more focused on the import taxes than demand when they bid up prices.

Unsure whether there will be tariffs, Dean decided not to stock up and instead has taken a hand-to-mouth approach to supplying his plant, which prefabricates structural framework.

"I was going to lose money because tariffs happen, or I was going to lose money because there were no tariffs," he said. "It was 50/50 either way. So, I sat on my hands."

On-the-spot prices are down too, according to Random Lengths. The trade publication and pricing service's Framing Lumber Composite Index has declined about 12% since 1 August.

Producers are responding by cutting back.

Interfor, North America's third-largest lumber producer, said Thursday that it will choke back output by 12% with cuts across its sawmills in the US South, Pacific Northwest, British Columbia and eastern Canada. It will reduce hours and reconfigure shifts as well as lengthen holiday breaks and maintenance shutdowns to reduce production by about 145 million board feet through year-end.



The RAHC seeks to inspire and educate consumers and professionals on the uses and benefits of real hardwood products.

Build Your World™. That's the name of the first-ever national advertising campaign promoting Real American Hardwood® products. The campaign launched about a month ago by the Real American Hardwood Coalition on the Magnolia Network, the lifestyle channel owned by household names Chip and Joanna Gaines and entertainment conglomerate Warner Bros., to promote Real American Hardwood® flooring, cabinetry, furniture, millwork, and more.

# Continued...

Domtar, another big producer, is taking downtime at its sawmill in Glenwood, Ark., indefinitely idling another in Maniwaki, Quebec, and eliminating a shift at its facility in the province's Côte-Nord region, a spokesman said.

Analysts and traders say there will have to be further cuts to ease the glut of wood. That might not be a problem, given how higher duties have pushed up Canadian sawmills' break-even prices while demand wanes.

"We anticipate further closures or curtailments," said Truist Securities analyst Michael Roxland.

The White House is still contemplating broad tariffs on imported wood in the name of national security, as it has with aluminium, steel and copper products. Any tariffs from Trump would be separate from the existing duties levied on Canadian softwood lumber imports, which fulfill about 24% of US consumption.

Those antidumping and countervailing duties are the result of a decadeslong trade dispute. They rose last month to about 35% for most Canadian producers, from 15%. The heavily litigated rates are reset annually based on Canadian exporters' sales data from two years prior.

Before the duties rose, Canadian mills that manage inventories for big customers ranging from home centres to wholesalers filled warehouses and distribution centres, said Matt Layman, a market analyst and consultant who publishes Layman's Lumber Guide. That means they already have plenty of unsold lumber near its final destination.

"Producers were so confident, they overlooked one glaring obvious hurdle while piling up lumber in the US: demand or lack thereof," he said. "There is easily enough wood on the ground in the US to cover several months of anticipated fall demand."

Residential building permits dropped in July to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of about 1.4 million units, the fewest since June 2020.

Total U.S. construction spending was down 3.4% in July from the record set in May 2024.

Yet mortgage rates have lately trended lower, and Wall Street is pricing in near certainty that the Fed cuts rates at its meeting later this month, according to CME's FedWatch Tool.

Cheaper borrowing costs could spur more construction and home buying as well as entice homeowners to borrow against their properties to fund repairs and renovations, which are the single greatest source of lumber demand.

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# Why Your Grandfather Would Outsell Today's Salesperson

## by John Chapin

This is an updated article I originally wrote about ten years ago. It's still very relevant today. With the development of the internet, social media, the "new" relationship and solution selling techniques, and most recently AI, there seems to be a belief out there that today's salespeople are superior to those of the past. As you can probably gather from the title, I don't necessarily agree. Here's why.

Three key factors that give the old guard an advantage over the new guard

### Preparation and sales skills

When my dad went for training at I.B.M. in the early 60s, it was primarily sales training. Yes, you learned the product too, but they made sure you knew everything about selling: getting through the gatekeeper to the decision maker, how to present your product, overcoming objections, closing, follow up, and how to build solid, long-term relationships. Everything was scripted and you role played until you could recite everything verbatim if someone woke you from a sound sleep at three in the morning. They also covered the important basics such as how to dress, the right way to shake hands, and to pop a breath mint before a sales call while avoiding garlic during the workweek.

These days I am amazed by the lack of sales skills I run into on a daily basis. If I walk into almost any sales meeting and blurt out objections, stalls, and other prospect obstacles the salespeople have been running into every day for years, they stall, stammer, and trip over their tongues as if it's the first time they're hearing what I'm throwing at them. I even give people objections during the interview just to see what their best, current response is to something simple like, "I can get it cheaper down the street." If they've been in sales for any length of time, they'd better have a good, solid response that easily rolls off their tongue. Add to that the fact that many salespeople these days seem to be much more lax with dress, manners, and etiquette in general. Knowing how to sell, dressing well, having a good handshake, and other "basics" should be common sense, but that common sense, which was common decades ago, is more the exception than the rule in today's selling world.

### Dedication and commitment

When it comes to dedication and commitment, you're not going to beat The World War II Generation. They were also tough to beat when it came to living up to promises and their word. When you hired someone from that generation they understood that they had an obligation to the company, their boss, and their family for whom they needed to provide.

Regarding one of the biggest issues today: accountability, decades ago people were responsible enough to hold themselves accountable. My dad tracked his calls and kept a call sheet, but these were success tools as opposed to something his manager used to make sure he was doing what he was supposed to be doing. My dad's generation would never consider fudging a call sheet or hiding out in a coffee shop or movie theatre when they were supposed to be out making calls. Yes, there were a few of

those people back then but not many, and they weren't employed with that company for very long, in fact most never snuck by the interview process which usually finished with dinner at a nice restaurant with the spouses present. When it came to another major issue motivation, simply putting in an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, along with taking care of the company, the customers, and one's family, was all the motivation one needed. It didn't matter how you felt on a given day, the question was about the obligation and commitment you signed up for.

That generation also brought character traits and a work ethic to the job that we rarely see these days. All of this comes back to the dedication and commitment they felt toward others and the obligation in knowing that if you're taking a paycheck from someone, you owe them your best.

### Focus on people

The World War II Generation would never be accused of being the "me" generation. My dad was the number one sales rep in New England for over 30 years for I.B.M. and Diebold Banking Equipment because, like most people of his generation, his objective was to help and serve other people. Decades ago I think there was much more of a focus on other people and more of a "the-customer-is-always-right" mentality. While many talk about past salespeople beating people up and having one more close than they had objection, I find that the best of the best have always sold the right way, with a focus on the other person. And by the way, there is no "new" relationship selling. Even 60 years ago, the best have always focused on the relationship and what's best for the other person, thinking of themselves, their product, and their company second.

All of the above said, are there hard workers out there today who are committed? Yes. Also, AI, social media, other technology, and new sales ideas are tremendous tools to find the right prospects at the right time, warm up cold calls, pinpoint prospect pains, and continue to connect and communicate effectively with prospects and customers. So although I'll take the work ethic and character traits of someone from the World War II Generation using a car, pay phones, and keeping track of prospects on index cards, every day of the week and twice on Sunday, imagine the best of both worlds. Start with someone hungry, with a blue-collar mentality, and a thick skin who isn't afraid to show up early, leave late, and pound the pavement making more calls than anyone else. Combine that with someone who cares about people, studies their craft and knows their product. Who practices, drills, and rehearses their presentation, answers to objections, closes, and anything and everything they're likely to run into during the day. Finally, add knowledge of AI tools, social media and technology, using it in a supporting role, in the background, and not as the foundation for their sales efforts. Yes, those people are out there. No, they are not easy to find. Time to get to work.



## Episode 3 Becoming FSC Certified



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# PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Marylou Fabbo, Esq., Skoler, Abbott & Presser, P.C

## Understanding the H-1B Visa and Trump's \$100,000 Executive Order

There has been much misinformation circulating since President Trump signed a proclamation titled "Restriction On Entry Of Certain Non-Immigrant Workers" (the "Order") announcing a \$100,000 fee per H-1B visa petition. For example, while many claim that an H-1B visa allows employers to hire employees at a lower rate, the opposite is actually true. H-1B employees cost employers more than the cost of employing an American citizen in the same role. Because incorrect information about the H-1B visa has been widely circulated, this will set the story straight.

The H-1B visa has long been a cornerstone of U.S. immigration policy, allowing American companies to hire highly skilled foreign workers in specialty occupations such as technology, engineering, and healthcare. But the recent Order signed by President Donald Trump has dramatically altered the landscape for employers seeking to use this visa program.

### **What Is an H-1B Visa?**

The H-1B visa is a very difficult to obtain nonimmigrant visa that permits U.S. employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. These roles typically require at least a bachelor's degree and specialized knowledge. Non-exempt, hourly unskilled laborers such as farm workers or health care aides do not qualify.

Some examples of specialty occupations in some different categories that may qualify for an H-1B visa:

- **Technology & Engineering:** Degreed Engineers, Software Developers, Systems and Cyber Security Analysts. Who is not eligible? The person at your organization who you call when you are having a problem with your computer is one example of a role that is not eligible for an H-1B visa.
- **Healthcare & Life Sciences:** Physicians, Surgeons, Dentists, and Biomedical Engineers. Not eligible to apply for the visa are certified nursing aides (a/k/a/ CNAs) and individuals in similar, hourly positions.
- **Education:** University Professor, Technical Writers (especially in academic or scientific fields). Not eligible: High school teachers, classroom aides, school bus drivers.
- **Science & Research:** Chemists, Physicists, and Statisticians.

H-1B Visas are issued for three years, with the possibility of a maximum 3-year extension.

### **H-1B Visas are Difficult to Get**

Some articles suggest that these visas are being handed out willy-nilly. That is very far from true. A cap of 85,000 H-1B visas are given out each year, and of the 85,000, 20,000 H-1B Visa holders must hold a master's degree or above. In FY 2025, 442,000 people entered into a required lottery to find out if they could apply for an H-1B visa. Those selected did not automatically receive an H-1B visa, rather, they had to go through a vetting process that included their employers submitting a petition (and relevant documentation) in support of the petition. Many applicants are denied. The government requires various fees for the H-1B process, and employers usually incur \$3,000 - \$10,000 (or more) in attorneys' fees, depending on the complexity of the case. No refunds are issued if the petition is denied or the employee quits; and the employee cannot be required to pay anything other than an optional fee of around \$2,000 to get a rush decision.

**Key Employer Obligations: H-1B Employees Must Be At Least Paid Prevailing Wage and At Least As Much as Their US Citizen Co-Workers in the Same Role**

H-1B holders are not cheap labor. One of the most important requirements for employers sponsoring H-1B workers is the "prevailing wage rule". Under current law, employers must pay H-1B employees at least the prevailing wage for the occupation in the geographic area of employment—or the actual wage paid to similarly qualified employees in the same position—whichever is higher. The prevailing wage is defined as the average wage paid to similarly employed workers in a specific occupation and location. This ensures that foreign workers are not used to undercut American wages.

If the employer is successful in the lengthy and costly process of hiring an H-1B employee, the H-1B employee is free to leave the employer's employment and go work somewhere else with an H-1B transfer. And the employer cannot require the employee to pay back any of the costs it incurred in obtaining the visa. In addition, if the employer lays-off or terminates the H-1B worker, the employer must offer to pay the costs associated with the employee returning to the employee's home country.

### **Trump's Executive Order: A \$100,000 Fee Per H-1B Petition**

On September 19, 2025, President Trump signed a sweeping Order that imposes a \$100,000 fee per H-1B visa petition for workers outside the United States. This fee applies to new petitions filed after September 21, 2025, and is intended to curb what the administration has characterized as widespread abuse of the H-1B program. The Order also includes:

- Stricter wage level rules, directing the Department of Labor to revise how prevailing wages are calculated.
- Prioritization of high-paid, highly skilled workers, especially in STEM fields.
- Exceptions for cases deemed to be in the national interest, that don't pose a threat to national security. The exception can be granted by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

The Order is set to last one year, but it may be extended. Also, the Order appears to be limited to H-1B workers outside the United States.

### **What This Means for Employers**

Employers must now factor in the substantial \$100,000 fee when considering H-1B sponsorship. Additionally, they must continue to comply with existing prevailing wage requirements, ensuring that H-1B workers are paid fairly and equitably. While the Order aims to protect American jobs, critics argue it may discourage innovation and push companies to offshore jobs instead of hiring talent in the U.S. If you have questions or concerns about this new Order, we recommend that you contact employment immigration counsel.

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*This column is not intended as legal advice related to individual situations. If your business is confronted with a specific legal problem, take advantage of your free hour of legal consulting from Skoler Abbott.*

# HR QUESTION OF THE MONTH

## Question

We've had employees stop showing up to work without notice. At what point does that count as job abandonment, and what are some signs to look for?

## Answer

There is no single definition of job abandonment; however, job abandonment generally occurs when an employee fails to report to work for a certain number of days without notifying their employer and without indicating an intent to return. Whether job abandonment occurs may depend on an employer's particular job abandonment policy or practices. Job abandonment is distinguishable from other unexplained or unexcused absences as it generally involves an employee's failure to communicate their absence and plan to return to work.

Some examples of job abandonment include but are not limited to:

- Failing to report on the first day of work;
- Not calling or not showing up for consecutive days;
- Failing to return from an approved leave of absence;
- Leaving work mid-shift without notice (for example, failing to return following a meal or rest break); and
- Failing to report to work following a relocation or reassignment.

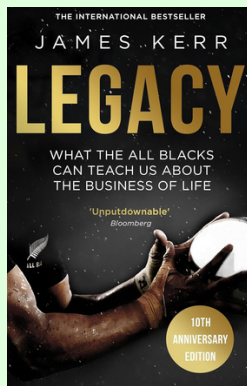
A clearly written job abandonment policy is essential for setting expectations around attendance and handling unexcused absences consistently across the organization. This policy serves as a valuable reference for employers when deciding on disciplinary actions and next steps if an employee fails to report to work. It's helpful to outline key details, such as how many consecutive unexcused absences qualify as job abandonment and the possible consequences, including termination.

It is a best practice to work with legal counsel when drafting such a policy to ensure it meets an employer's needs while remaining legally compliant.



*The HR Question of the Month is provided by Zywave®, a company wholly independent from Federated Insurance. Federated provides its clients access to this information through the Federated Employment Practices Network with the understanding that neither Federated nor its employees provide legal or employment advice. As such, Federated does not warrant the accuracy, adequacy, or completeness of the information herein. This information may be subject to restrictions and regulation in your state. Consult with your own qualified legal counsel regarding your specific facts and circumstances.*

## An Interesting Read



### **Legacy: What the All Blacks Can Teach Us About the Business of Life** by James Kerr

New Zealand's national rugby team, the All Blacks, is the world's most successful sporting team. Wondering how the determination, high level of training, and sustained success of a rugby team can help you in a leadership position? Give this a read and find out. Kerr delves deep into the culture of the All Black's success and shares 15 practical lessons for leadership.



### Thoughts of the Month

**Thanksgiving is the time to count your blessings, not carbs.**

**Let gratitude be your attitude.**

**What if today, we were just grateful for everything? - Charlie Brown**

## Membership Benefits

### FEATURED ASSOCIATION PROGRAM

When your company becomes a member of the WPMA, you are automatically entitled to take advantage of several programs that are available at no additional cost which means these programs are included in your annual dues. These programs and services have all been designed and created to help your company save money.

**One of the programs include:**

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- Bonding Services
- Life and Disability Income Protection
- Referrals to Independent Succession Planning Attorneys
- Access to a Variety of Risk Management Materials
- Computer-based Safety Training Courses

Click link in email to learn more about what they offer and the complimentary risk management materials available to all WPMA members.

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