

Numbers coming down.

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell only slightly last week to a seasonally adjusted 382,000. The level suggests hiring remains weak.

The Labor Department says applications declined by 3,000 from the previous week, which was revised up. The four-week average, a less volatile measure, rose for the fifth straight week to 377,750, the highest level in nearly three months.

Applications were skewed higher two weeks ago by the fallout from Hurricane Isaac. A Labor Department spokesman said there were no special factors last week.

Weekly applications are a measure of the pace of layoffs. When they consistently top 375,000, it is usually a sign that hiring isn't strong enough to push down the unemployment rate.

Employers added only 96,000 jobs last month, below July's total of 141,000.