

TOP STORIES

Adeptus USA Plans a \$215.56 Million Pine Moulding Plant in South Carolina

Adeptus USA will invest \$215.56 million and add 217 jobs at a plant in Honea Path, in Anderson County, South Carolina, the state's commerce department announced September 30. The figures are the company's. The site at 1205 Hamby Road will be its first operation in the state. It will make value-added pine products, chiefly painted and primed moulding, boards, shiplap and panel products. Operations are expected to start in the second quarter of 2027. The state's Coordinating Council for Economic Development approved job development credits for the company. It also awarded Anderson County an \$850,000 Closing Fund grant for building improvements at the site. The company's chief executive thanked Atlantic Union Bank, USDA Rural Development and two other firms for their part in the project. No financing amounts were given.

Texas and Georgia Lift Truck Weight Limits Under Emergency Orders

Texas suspended overweight-permit requirements on September 28 for trucks hauling timber, fuel and agricultural products at gross weights up to 95,000 pounds. The suspension rests on a disaster declaration Governor Greg Abbott issued that day. The state's motor vehicle department lists unrefined timber, wood chips and equipment used to load timber as examples of covered loads. A load must still be one that would qualify for a permit. Escort rules and nighttime limits still apply. Trucks may not cross a load-posted bridge above its rating unless it is the only public access. The Texas suspension runs until the governor ends it or the declaration expires. Georgia Governor Brian Kemp declared a state of emergency the same day. His order suspends the state's fuel taxes from September 29 through October 29, including 37.3 cents a gallon on diesel and 33.3 cents on gasoline. It also suspends state weight limits on commercial vehicles, without a new ceiling stated in the release. The governor's office put the average Georgia diesel price at \$6.24 a gallon.

Bassett Furniture Collects \$2.8 Million in Tariff Refunds

Bassett Furniture said September 30 it has received \$2.8 million from US Customs and Border Protection in refunds of tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), following the Supreme Court's February ruling against those tariffs. It booked \$1.0 million to gross profit in its fiscal third quarter, which ended August 29, and expects most of the rest in the fourth quarter. Net income rose to \$2.1 million, or 24 cents a share, from \$801,000 a year earlier. Net sales rose 3.4 percent to \$82.8 million. Gross margin widened to 57.5 percent from 56.2 percent. Wholesale sales rose 5.7 percent to \$53.7 million, and wholesale orders rose 7.9 percent. Imports account for less than 25 percent of the products Bassett sells. In September, Hooker Furnishings reported \$7.9 million in tariff recoveries for its latest quarter, and MillerKnoll said IEEPA refunds added about \$10 million net to operating income.

WHAT YOU MISSED YESTERDAY

Wednesday, September 30 — business, markets, and the broader economy, with Thursday's construction and factory readings.

- US stocks closed the quarter mixed Wednesday. The S&P 500 fell 19.30 points, or 0.25 percent, to 7,651.54. The Dow lost 443.87 points, or 0.86 percent, to 50,906.05, while the Nasdaq Composite rose 63.52 points, or 0.24 percent, to 26,861.06.
- The 10-year Treasury yield rose 3 basis points to 5.29 percent, its highest close of September, and the 30-year rose 5 basis points to 5.64 percent. The 10-year par yield eased to 5.24 percent Thursday.
- Construction spending rose an estimated 0.9 percent in August to a \$2,203.1 billion annual rate, a change the government rates as not statistically significant at plus or minus 1.0 percent. Spending was 1.7 percent below a year earlier. New single-family construction rose 0.2 percent on the month and was 3.5 percent lower on the year.
- A national survey of purchasing managers put September manufacturing at 54.5, a ninth month of expansion, with its prices index up 6.8 points to 77.9. Wood products makers reported lower new orders and export orders and higher raw-material prices, along with higher backlogs and employment.
- Mortgage purchase applications fell 4 percent in the week ended September 25, and refinance applications fell 9 percent.

INDUSTRY & COMPANY NEWS

- **EGGER**, the Austrian wood-based panel maker, has agreed to take a 30 percent minority stake in Sinowolf, a Chinese edgebanding producer, according to a September 30 report. Sinowolf, founded in 2007, has plants in Zhaoqing and Huzhou and about 1 billion meters a year of edgebanding capacity, with exports to more than 30 countries. It will keep its own brand and operate independently. Closing is expected by November, subject to conditions. No price was disclosed.
- **Vanhälls Såg**, a third-generation family birch sawmill in Smedjebacken, Sweden, is closing after losses despite rising sales, according to an October 1 report. The mill saws and processes birch, partly for furniture makers. One of its two owners told the local paper the decision came a few months ago, after about three years of discussion. He said the mill's raw material disappeared when the war broke out and that furniture buying has been weaker since. No closing date was given.

- **Forest Villa Home** is building a five-story, fire-rated office in Fukuoka, Japan, with cross-laminated timber (CLT) walls and floors, the company said September 23. The building uses 359 cubic meters of wood, with floor panels made from Fukuoka-grown timber, and the company puts the carbon dioxide stored in the wood at 249 metric tons. The project was selected twice for the national demonstration program, for design in fiscal 2024 and construction in fiscal 2025. The company calls it the first building of its kind in Japan, based on its own survey. Structure tours of the building under construction run November 18 to 20 and November 26.
- **Wildfire status.** Thursday morning's national situation report held the national and Northwest preparedness levels at 2. Northwest personnel fell by 204 to 1,982, and the region logged two new fires covering 1 acre the day before. The report lists the Sisi Fire near Stehekin, Washington, at 4,330 acres and 29 percent contained, with residences threatened. It shows the Little Giant Fire at 93 percent contained with 40 structures lost. It puts this year's national total at 8,604,892 acres, 141 percent of the 10-year average.

■ DEEP DIVE: PRESCRIBED SMOKE

S. 5045 Clears the Senate

The Senate passed S. 5045, the Wildfire Emissions Prevention Act of 2026, by unanimous consent on September 29. Senators John Curtis of Utah and Jeff Merkley of Oregon lead the bill, which was introduced July 21. The Environment and Public Works Committee approved it September 16 by a 19-0 vote, according to the sponsors. The bill amends section 319(b) of the Clean Air Act, the exceptional-events provision. That section lets a state ask the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set aside monitor readings driven by events outside normal pollution control. Under the bill, a prescribed fire meets the event test on its own and would no longer have to be shown to be not reasonably controllable or preventable. EPA must still find it exceptional, or a state petition must be deemed approved. A prescribed fire is defined as one deliberately ignited under applicable law to burn wildland fuels in a predetermined area for planned resource objectives, including cultural burning as determined by an Indian tribe. A savings clause keeps stationary-source emissions that did not qualify before from qualifying now.

What the 2016 Rule Asks of a Planned Burn

EPA's exceptional events rule, last rewritten in October 2016 at 40 CFR 50.14, already lets prescribed-fire smoke qualify, with a heavier burden of proof than for wildfire. EPA presumes that any wildfire burning mainly on wildland was not reasonably controllable or preventable, absent compelling evidence otherwise. For a prescribed fire, the state must certify that it runs a smoke management program. It can instead show that the burn manager used basic smoke management practices: evaluating dispersion, monitoring air quality, keeping a burn record, notifying the public, reducing emissions and coordinating use of the airshed. It may cite a multi-year land management plan to show the burn was not reasonably preventable. Every demonstration must include a narrative model of the event and a clear causal relationship. It also needs comparisons with the same monitor at other times and a public comment period of at least 30 days. The data come out only after EPA posts its concurrence in its air-quality database. The rule sets no deadline for EPA's decision.

A One-Year Clock on EPA

S. 5045 gives EPA one year to approve or disapprove a state's petition. A petition with no decision by then is deemed approved, though EPA can later find the event was not exceptional. For prescribed fire, the causal link between burn and monitor reading need only be reasonably expected to exist. The bill writes the data exclusion into designations, classifications and attainment determinations. If several state, local or tribal agencies ask, EPA must lead a regional, national or international demonstration. EPA must propose rule changes within 270 days of enactment, after consulting federal land managers, state air agencies, state foresters, fish and wildlife agencies and tribes. The final rule is due 180 days after the proposal. A Smoke Ready Communities grant program would pay up to 90 percent of project costs, subject to appropriations, with no dollar amount authorized. EPA cut the annual standard for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) to 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter in February 2024, and the D.C. Circuit upheld that level on June 26, 2026. The House passed a broader exceptional-events bill, H.R. 6387, on April 22.

The Northwest's Smoke Rules and the Bill's Backers

Oregon's 2019 smoke management rules, effective March 1 of that year, define an intrusion into a smoke-sensitive area by measured fine particulate. The trigger is 26 micrograms per cubic meter over a midnight-to-midnight day or 70 in any hour, counting particulate from all sources. Earlier rules counted any ground-level smoke from a burn. The 2019 revision moved Special Protection Zones for Oakridge, Klamath Falls and Lakeview into rule. EPA approved Washington's updated smoke management plan on August 10, 2023, its first approval of the state's plan since 2003. The sponsors list the American Wood Council, the American Forest & Paper Association, the National Alliance of Forest Owners, the Hardwood Federation and the National Wooden Pallet & Container Association among supporters. Three air-regulator groups are also on the list, including the Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies and the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association.

■ RATES & CONSTRUCTION SNAPSHOT

INDICATOR	VALUE	TREND
30-year fixed mortgage average, Oct 1 survey	7.28%	From 7.03% a week earlier and 6.71% on Sept 3
10-year Treasury par yield	5.29%	Sept 30, highest close of September; 5.24% Oct 1
Private residential construction, August (annual rate)	\$882.3B	+1.1% on the month (not statistically significant); -4.8% year over year
Manufacturing prices index, September	77.9	Up 6.8 points from August
Canadian dollars per US dollar	1.4243	Oct 1 daily average, from 1.4188 Sept 29; no Sept 30 rate posted

■ ON DECK

Friday, October 2

- The September employment report, which includes wood products payrolls, is due at 8:30 a.m. Eastern.
- August factory orders are due at 10 a.m. Eastern.

Tuesday, October 6

- Comments close on the proposed rescission of the 2001 Roadless Rule.
- August international trade in goods and services is due at 8:30 a.m. Eastern.

Wednesday, October 14

- The September consumer price index is due at 8:30 a.m. Eastern.

Thursday, October 15

- September producer prices, including softwood and hardwood lumber, are due at 8:30 a.m. Eastern.