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The Elevator Index will be updated quarterly, with an annual report each December. For now, the numbers look positive. So if you're waiting for the next indicator of progress, just press "up."

Record Year of Job Announcements
Marks Economic High Point for North Carolina

Governor Stein celebrates 33,000 new jobs, record investments, and growing opportunity statewide

North Carolina has hit a major economic milestone - a record-breaking 33,000 new jobs announced across the state this year. During his latest NC Strong Update, Governor Josh Stein joined the North Carolina Department of Commerce and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) to celebrate what he called "a banner year for jobs, innovation, and opportunity."

"Thanks to our skilled workforce, our business-friendly climate, and remarkable quality of life, North Carolina is the top state for business in the country," said Governor Stein. "We are hard at work to continue leading the way and living up to the promise in our state toast - North Carolina is the land where the weak grow strong and the strong grow great."

Commerce Secretary Lee Lilley credited teamwork for the state's record-setting year. "Across the state, businesses are creating great jobs and investing in North Carolina because we give them the best chance at success," he said. "This achievement reflects the strong collaboration between the Department of Commerce, EDPNC, and the Governor's office - all working together to move our state forward."

Since taking office, Governor Stein has announced nearly \$23 billion in project investments across 47 counties, many of them rural. Recent highlights include the start of production at Toyota's first North American battery plant, Scout Motors' new Charlotte headquarters bringing 1,200 jobs, and Vulcan Elements' \$1 billion investment in Johnston County - the largest rare earth magnet factory in the world outside China.

The Governor emphasized that the state's success extends beyond large cities. "Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, especially in rural North Carolina," Stein said. "We're going to keep rebuilding western North Carolina and investing in broadband and infrastructure to help people start businesses, get good jobs, and build strong futures - no matter where they live."

This year alone, rural NC has seen nearly 5,000 new jobs and \$12.5 billion in investment. The SmBiz and Rural Infrastructure Authority programs have provided over \$47 million in grants to help communities restore buildings, repair utilities, and revitalize local economies. Additional programs are strengthening rural broadband and healthcare, including a proposed \$200 million Rural Health Transformation Plan to improve access to care in 85 counties.

Among this year's standout successes is GE Aerospace's expansion in West Jefferson, which will create 44 new jobs and bring a \$53 million investment to Ashe County. "GE Aerospace has long invested in North Carolina," said Governor Stein. "Our booming aerospace industry and talented workforce attract industry giants like GE Aerospace to choose North Carolina for the jobs of today and tomorrow."

Christopher Chung, CEO of the EDPNC, echoed the sentiment. "Whether it's the largest manufacturing workforce in the Southeast or our flourishing aerospace industry, North Carolina has a clear competitive edge," he said. "With investments like these, we'll keep building industries that create opportunity for all North Carolinians."

GE Aerospace, which employs over 2,000 workers across the state - including 20% veterans - plans to invest an additional \$150 million in 2025 across four sites. With recent growth from companies like JetZero, HondaJet, RTX, and HAECO, North Carolina is emerging as a hub for the future of aerospace and advanced manufacturing.

From biotech and batteries to broadband and business investment, 2025 has proven that North Carolina's economy is not just strong...it's soaring.

For more about NC's economic development progress, visit www.commerce.nc.gov.

8 Tips For Dealing With Holiday Pop-Up Shops

Shop smart and avoid the "here today, gone tomorrow" holiday headache

Festivals and Christmas markets are bursting with charm - and so are the pop-up shops that appear during the holidays. While many are delightful places to find unique gifts, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) urges shoppers to keep their guard up when browsing temporary vendors.

Each year, BBB receives complaints about fly-by-night pop-ups and seasonal stores that vanish faster than the last Christmas cookie. Consumers report poor-quality items, missing deliveries, and refund issues once booths close for the season. One unhappy shopper said, "I ordered a custom hoodie in June. The vendor promised to ship it, but I never got it - or my money back."

BBB's advice? Shop with both your heart and your head.

- Ask how long the shop will be open and what their return policy is after the holidays.
- Review purchase policies before you buy. If they can't commit to handling refunds or exchanges, keep your money in your pocket.
- Confirm special orders in writing and always pay with a credit card for protection.
- Check quality carefully - if that "designer" bag costs less than a fruitcake, it's probably fake.
- Guard your information - pay cash for small items, but use credit for larger ones to protect against fraud.
- Research online sellers before buying, and verify contact info and BBB accreditation at www.bbb.org.

Pop-up shopping can be fun - just remember that some "temporary" shops disappear permanently the moment you need a refund.

5 Ways To Avoid Delivery Scams

'Tis the season for online shopping - and for scammers pretending to be delivery companies. The BBB warns that fake delivery texts and porch thefts are on the rise during the holidays.

Common scams include fake "tracking" links, bogus missed delivery notes, and phony "incomplete address" messages. Some even demand fees to release packages supposedly "on hold." Others are simply thieves snatching boxes right off your porch.

BBB's top tips

- Never click delivery links in texts or emails. Go straight to the carrier's official site.
- Track your orders directly through the retailer's page.
- Request a signature for high-value packages.
- Don't leave boxes on the porch. Have them sent to your work, a neighbor, or a secure locker.
- Inspect deliveries immediately for tampering or missing items.

Scammers count on you being distracted this time of year - so keep one eye on your inbox and the other on your doorstep!

Labor Commissioner Unveils
North Carolina's First-Ever "Elevator Index"

It's a unique way to measure the ups and downs of the economy

It's official: the economy is on the rise...literally. North Carolina Commissioner of Labor Luke Farley has announced the state's first "Elevator Index," a new barometer designed to track elevator activity as an indicator of construction, job creation, and economic growth.

According to the Department of Labor's inaugural report, the number of active elevators, escalators, and moving walkways rose by 2.36% statewide in Fiscal Year 2025, increasing from 31,494 to 32,236. That's a lot of upward mobility.

"As North Carolina's economy grows, so does construction - and almost every new building needs elevators," Commissioner Farley explained. "This isn't just a quirky stat, it's a real-world metric showing that our state is moving up."

Elevator inspections also climbed 17.3%, a sure sign that the Department's inspectors have been busy making sure every lift, hoist, and escalator is safe for holiday shoppers and office workers alike.

Farley, who took office in January 2025, has made safety and economic development twin priorities. He says the Elevator Index offers a new window into where growth is happening - or at least, where things are going smoothly between floors.

"New elevators tell us where investment is happening, and where workers are needed," Farley said. "By tracking elevator activity, we gain insight into the state's economic health."

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A Tuna Christmas Brings
Hometown Holiday Hilarity
to the Ansonia Theatre

Final performances are this weekend

The laughs keep coming to the Ansonia Theatre as *A Tuna Christmas* wraps up its run this weekend, December 12-14, at the historic downtown Wadesboro theater.

Directed by cTommy Wooten, the holiday comedy stars Tyler Baucom, Jim Stegall, Tonya Manus, and Glenn Caulder playing more than twenty of Tuna, Texas's wonderfully eccentric residents. From radio DJs to Christmas yard-display rivals, the show delivers nonstop laughter and southern-fried cheer.

"A Tuna Christmas is a holiday tradition that's equal parts heartwarming and hilarious," says Wooten.

Performances are Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. Tickets are available at: ansoniatheatre.com or by calling 704-694-4950.



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