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# Jobless claims fall

## Americans filing new claims for benefits fell 10,000 last week, in line with expectations.

March 17, 2005: 8:34 AM EST

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The number of Americans filing new claims for jobless benefits fell 10,000 last week, largely in line with expectations, a government report showed Thursday.

Initial claims for state unemployment insurance aid fell to 318,000 in the week ended March 12 from a revised 328,000 the prior week, the Labor Department said.

Wall Street economists had forecast a drop in claims to 315,000 from the originally reported 327,000 level the prior week.

A Labor Department analyst said there were no special factors behind the drop in first-time claims.

New claims have held below 350,000 for nine straight weeks -- a trend which economists view as a sign of a slowly improving job market.

The closely watched four-week moving average, viewed by economists as a better gauge of the labor market's health because it smooths weekly volatility, rose to 316,500 from 312,750 the previous week.

The number of people who remained on the jobless rolls after drawing an initial week of benefits fell 48,000 to 2.65 million in the week ended March 5, the latest week for which data are available.

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