

Wall Street Report

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Investors fear worsening economy

Wall Street ended its worst January ever by stumbling again over the banking system and the economy. The Dow Jones industrial average — down a record 8.84 percent for the month — fell 148.15 to close at 8,000.86 on Friday.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS



Top gainers
Shares worth \$2 or more

NYSE	Close	% Chg.
MLFord31	6.75	+32.4
HorizLns	3.44	+19.4
CitiAmzn09	n7.50	+16.8
BuckTch	2.92	+13.2
BostBeer	25.24	+12.5
AsdEstat	7.42	+12.4
SagaCm rs	4.41	+12.2

Top losers
Shares worth \$2 or more

NYSE	Close	% Chg.
Ferro	3.96	-20.0
Spartch	3.17	-18.5
Lindsay	26.00	-18.3
StratJPM35	10.40	-17.9
AMCOL	14.49	-17.7
Americdt	4.71	-17.7
MS SP12-10	9.93	-17.3

Most active
Shares worth \$1 or more

NYSE	Close	Change
SPDR Fndcl	9.24	-26
BkofAm	6.58	-20
Citigrp	3.55	-35
ProUtlFin	3.24	-16
GenElec	12.13	-59
WellsFargo	18.90	+12
DixrFinBull	9.17	-71

Dilbert by Scott Adams



Simon Property reports higher results

Simon Property Group Inc.'s funds from operations for its fourth quarter increased 6.5 percent to \$540 million, it said Friday. The Indianapolis-based company owns Florida Mall in Orlando, Waterford Lakes Town Center in east Orange County, Seminole Towne Center in Sanford and Orlando Premium Outlets near Walt Disney World. Despite the most difficult retail environment in decades, Simon Property Group said it was able to do well because it adopted aggressive cost control measures and significantly reduced development spending. Rent at its centers has gone up between 6 percent and 7 percent, though sales at the regional malls have decreased. Simon's shares fell \$1.46 to close at \$42.98 on the New York Stock Exchange on Friday.

U.S. seizes Ocala bank and 2 others

Federal regulators have closed three banks — one each in Florida, Maryland and Utah — bringing to six the total number of failures this year. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. was appointed receiver of the banks: **Ocala National Bank** of Ocala; **Suburban Federal Savings Bank** in Crofton, Md.; and **MagnetBank** of Salt Lake City. **CenterState Bank** of Florida is assuming Ocala

National Bank's \$205.2 million in deposits. Ocala National's four locations will reopen Monday as branches of CenterState. **Bank of Essex** in Tappahannock, Va., is taking over the deposits of Suburban Federal's \$302 million in deposits. The FDIC says it was unable to find another bank to take over MagnetBank's \$282.8 million in deposits.

Exxon's '08 profit shatters U.S. record

Exxon Mobil Corp. on Friday reported a profit of \$45.2 billion for 2008, breaking its own record for a U.S. company, even as its fourth-quarter earnings fell 33 percent from a year ago. The previous record for annual profit was \$40.6 billion, which the world's largest publicly traded oil company set in 2007. The full-year profit wasn't a surprise given crude's triple-digit price for much of 2008, peaking near an unheard-of \$150 a barrel in July. Since then, however, prices have fallen roughly 70 percent amid a deepening global economic crisis. Net income for the Irving, Texas-based oil giant slid sharply to \$7.8 billion, or \$1.55 a share, in the October-December period. Revenue in the most-recent quarter fell 27 percent to \$84.7 billion.

Sandra Pedicini of the Sentinel staff contributed to this report. Information from The Associated Press also was used.



GOLD
\$927.30, + \$22.20
N.Y. Mercantile close



SILVER
\$12,560, + \$0.420
N.Y. Mercantile close



Dollar
\$1.2794, - \$0.017
vs. the euro

U.S. indexes

	Close	%Chg	YTD % Chg	12 mo %chg	52-wk high / Low
Dow Jones Industrials	8,000.86	-1.82	-8.84	-37.21	13,136.69 / 7,449.38
Dow Jones Transportation	2,965.69	-2.33	-16.16	-38.31	5,536.57 / 2,909.29
Dow Jones Utilities	369.70	-2.44	-2.9	-27.52	530.57 / 294.30
NYSE Composite	5,195.79	-1.98	-9.75	-44.00	9,687.24 / 4,607.47
Amex Index	1,420.43	+1.05	+1.64	-37.07	2,433.31 / 1,130.47
Nasdaq Composite	1,476.42	-2.08	-6.38	-38.82	2,551.47 / 1,295.48
S&P 500	825.88	-2.28	-8.57	-40.81	1,440.24 / 741.02
S&P MidCap	498.68	-2.63	-7.36	-39.44	897.37 / 406.45
Russell 2000	443.53	-2.14	-11.20	-39.28	764.38 / 371.30
DJ Wilshire 5000	8,335.64	-2.15	-8.27	-40.84	14,564.81 / 7,340.74

Stocks of local interest

	Close	Chg.	Darden	26.22	-1.15	IntlSpdw	23.28	-2.15	SwstAirl	7.03	-2.2
AT&T Inc	24.62	-0.09	Dillards	4.35	-0.06	JesupLam	.56	-0.01	SprintNex	2.43	-1.4
ActionPrh	.34	-0.06	Disney	20.68	-0.57	LightPath	.84	-0.21	StarwHdtl	15.12	-1.28
Adminstf	21.09	-0.16	Embarq	35.72	-0.08	LockhDM	82.04	-1.07	SunTrst	12.26	-1.09
AirTran	4.10	-0.39	FPL Grp	51.55	+0.38	Loews	24.40	-0.13	Target	31.20	-1.50
AuthnTec	1.66	+0.01	FaroTech	15.02	+0.02	Lowe's	18.27	-1.10	Tupprew	20.56	-1.03
BkofAm	6.58	-0.20	FedExCp	50.94	-3.59	MarIntA	16.31	-0.57	UPS B	42.49	-2.35
BwnBm	19.13	-0.12	GaylrdEnt	10.60	-0.25	McDnlds	58.02	-1.12	WalMart	47.12	-0.74
BurgerKing	22.25	-0.25	GenElec	12.13	-0.59	NatRetPrp	14.43	-0.75	Walgrn	27.41	-0.48
CVS Care	26.88	-0.49	GldFid	.32	-0.02	NorthropG	48.12	-0.33	WellsFargo	18.90	+0.12
AutnTec	1.66	+0.01	HarrisCorp	43.29	-0.19	ProgrsEn	38.72	-0.74	Winn-Dixie	13.74	-0.65
CnsTom	29.05	-1.00	HomeDp	21.53	-0.47	RuthsHosp	1.13	-0.21	Wyndham	6.13	-0.36
Cnvgys	7.53	-0.63	IntlAsst	6.75	-0.09	Siemens	56.06	-2.00	YumBrnds	28.62	-0.93
CrackerB	17.57	-0.60									

Mutual funds

	Close	Chg.	YTD	Vanguard Instl Fds: Instldx	75.61	-1.76	-8.4
PIMCO Instl PIMS: TotRt	10.15	-0.03	+0.6	Vanguard Idx Fds: TotBnd	10.07	...	-0.7
American Funds A: CaplBA p	38.88	-0.36	-6.4	Fidelity Invest: DivIntl	19.31	-0.08	-10.2
American Funds A: GwthA p	19.36	-0.34	-5.5	American Funds A: BalA p	12.99	-0.17	-5.7
American Funds A: CapWGA p	23.87	-0.35	-10.2	American Funds A: N PerA p	17.40	-0.29	-7.8
Fidelity Invest: Contra	42.70	-0.46	-5.7	Dodge&Cox: IntlStk	19.20	-0.35	-12.3
American Funds A: IncoA p	12.23	-0.12	-6.0	American Funds A: FdlInvA p	23.20	-0.40	-7.1
American Funds A: ICAA p	19.44	-0.42	-7.3	PIMCO Admin PIMS: TotRtAd	10.15	-0.03	+0.6
Vanguard Idx Fds: TotStk	20.00	-0.45	-8.3	Vanguard Fds: Welltn	23.10	-0.29	-5.4
Vanguard Idx Fds: 500	76.10	-1.77	-8.4	Vanguard Admiral: 500Adml	76.10	-1.78	-8.4
American Funds A: WshA p	19.45	-0.39	-9.2	American Funds A: BondA p	10.73	+0.01	+0.1
Dodge&Cox: Stock	67.08	-1.84	-9.8	Frank/Temp Frnk A: IncomA p	1.62	-0.01	-2.3
American Funds A: EupacA p	25.51	-0.21	-8.9	Fidelity Invest: GroCo	47.04	-0.98	-3.9

State Farm's threat would hurt 800 agents

By ANIKA MYERS PALM
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

With State Farm threatening to drop all of its property-insurance customers in Florida during the next couple of years, the future is as uncertain for the company's 800 Florida agents as it is for the 1.2 million policyholders.

"Something like this can have a devastating effect on the agency force," said Robert O'Connor, an attorney for the National Association of State Farm Agents.

The 800 agents are limited by State Farm Florida Insurance Co. to selling policies only for the company and for Citizens Property Insurance Corp., the state-backed insurer of last resort. And for now, at least, the company has no plans to lift the restriction, said Jim Thompson, president of State Farm Florida.

Florida's biggest privately held property insurer said Tuesday that it has filed a request with the state to pull all

of its homeowner-insurance business and related product lines out of Florida, citing its inability to win regulators' approval for higher rates. Earlier this month, Florida's insurance commissioner issued a final denial of State Farm's most recent request — to raise its rates statewide by more than 47 percent.

The Winter Haven company, part of State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co. of Bloomington, Ill., said it would continue selling and servicing auto, life and health-related insurance in Florida. But it intends to stop providing liability or damage coverage for homes, condos, commercial properties, personal goods and boats.

O'Connor, the State Farm agents' attorney, said the company's request to pull its property-insurance business from Florida reminded him of a situation early in this decade when State Farm's New Jersey arm said it would stop handling auto insurance in that state. Insurance compa-

nies were upset at the time with what they considered burdensome regulations, and some stopped doing business in the state.

A substantial number of State Farm agents in New Jersey retired rather than deal with the uncertainty of the situation — but New Jersey passed a series of legislative reforms in 2003, and State Farm stayed.

"You'd hope that you could forecast that same kind of happy result here," O'Connor said. "It's in large part dependent on the political climate and on the economic climate."

Florida insurance officials have 90 days in which to consider State Farm's request to stop selling and servicing property insurance in the state.

Aaron Deslatte of the Sentinel staff contributed to this report. Anika Myers Palm can be reached at apalm@orlandosentinel.com or 407-420-5022.

Beetles threaten avocados

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TAMPA — Scientists are expecting the tiny redbay ambrosia beetle to cause big trouble for Florida's avocado industry.

The beetle, an invasive species that has been moving through the state since 2005, spreads a fungus that is deadly to trees such as the avocado.

The fungus carries a disease called laurel wilt, which

can kill trees in a matter of weeks.

Jonathan Crane, a University of Florida professor and tropical-fruit crop specialist, said a fungicide that might protect trees is costly and might cause problems with the fruit.

Florida's avocado industry is the nation's second-largest. It could lose millions of dollars if laurel wilt reaches the state's southern tip, according to Crane.

"The scenario is not looking good, if we are right," Crane said.

The state's avocado crop earns about \$30 million wholesale each year, said Edward "Gilly" Evans, a state agricultural economist.

Commercial avocados grow on 7,500 acres, almost exclusively in Miami-Dade County.

They account for more than 60 percent of Florida's tropical-fruit production.

TREES

FROM PAGE B1

Spence said a homeowner in Daytona Beach called county officials two weeks ago when he suspected that one of the redbay trees in his yard was infested with the disease.

Spence, who inspected the tree, said the agriculture department collected samples and on Tuesday determined the tree was infested with laurel wilt, a relatively new and unknown disease.

The disease was first discovered in Georgia in 2002 in a wooden-crate shipment from southeast Asia. Ambrosia beetles carry the fungus on the spores of their body, spreading the disease and killing trees in the laurel family, which includes redbays, sassafras, avocados and other bay trees.

There is no cure for the disease, which has spread to more than 30 counties throughout Georgia, South Carolina and Florida, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Albert Mayfield of the Florida Division of Forestry said tens of thousands of trees in the laurel family have died from the disease.

He said laurel wilt disease could have a wide-ranging economic and environmental impact throughout Florida. Redbay trees are a source of food for many birds and other wildlife. One species of butterfly, the Palamedes swallowtail, is entirely dependent on the trees for food.

The disease also could affect Florida's \$30 million av-

ocado industry, which provides revenue and jobs for Miami-Dade County, Mayfield said.

"A lot of the ecological consequences probably haven't even been realized," he said.

Redbays grow in many backyards and are in several parks across the state. In Volusia County, it would be useless to replace trees along the beachside because they would just attract more beetles, Jarrett said.

"Not much can be done by planting more redbays," Jarrett said.

"All we're trying to do now is prevent the spreading."

Spence said the disease could be an added expense

for several counties.

"People need to be prepared to pay for the removal of these trees if they die," Spence said. "It costs less to treat these trees and keep them alive than to remove them."

Officials are using fungicides to help slow the spread of the disease, but the treatment is only temporary.

"In terms of stopping this disease on a wide scale, there's probably nothing that is going to stop it," Mayfield said. "Unfortunately, I think the disease and the beetle are here to stay."

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PRIDE

FROM PAGE B1

robotic arm and trained for the two spacewalks he'll make during the Discovery mission.

Last February, when he traveled to his parents' homeland of Puerto Rico, Acaba was received like a celebrity, recognized by the Puerto Rican House of Representatives. He also met with students.

"I was very surprised with all the love people showed to him, especially the students who were in their [teens]," said Ralph, who accompanied his son. "The girls received him as if he was a rock star."

Discovery is set to fly a truss segment to the international space station and install its final set of power-generating solar arrays.

"I can't even begin to realize how cool it's going to be and what it is going to feel like," Acaba said.

"The one thing I hear from all the experienced fliers is, 'Don't forget to take a moment and look out the window, take a moment to enjoy it ...

Otherwise, you can be up there for 14 days and the next thing you know, you are coming home without having had a chance to enjoy it."

Back on Earth, in his parent's house in Anaheim, Calif., where he was raised, he's the middle child. When the siblings get together — Ralph, 45; Richard, 44; Joe, 41, and Cynthia, 38 — the dynamic is rather typical.

"We treat him like a son, like a brother. His chore is to take out the trash and he does it without any problems," Ralph Acaba said.

The family is well aware of the risk of shuttle missions.

This week marked the 23rd anniversary of the breakup of Challenger, 73 seconds after it was launched Jan. 28, 1986, killing the first teacher/astronaut, Christa McAuliffe, and her six fellow crew members.

Ralph Acaba says he trusts his son's training as well as NASA's professionalism. And he and his wife are people of faith.

"My wife, who is kind of religious, prays the rosary on a daily basis," Ralph said.

Joe Acaba's aunt, Irma Car-

rasquillo of Fort Lauderdale, also prays every day for her nephew. She is Elsie's youngest sister.

"We call each other every night for support," she said. "We are kind of anxious about the trip, but we have faith in God that everything is going to be all right."

Joe Acaba knows the space program's future is uncertain — the shuttle is scheduled to be retired next year — but he knows where he is headed after he leaves NASA.

"When I started teaching I knew that was the job that I wanted to do," he said.

"I think I will definitely head back to the classroom and like all teachers you become more valuable when you share your personal experiences with students, and I think I will have some neat stories to tell and maybe some interesting ways to keep them motivated and want to learn a little bit."

Sentinel Space Editor Robert Block contributed to this report. Alsy Acevedo can be reached at aacevedo@orlandosentinel.com or 407-540-4004.

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