



Appliances line the aisles of a Cowboy Maloney's Electric City Superstore in Jackson, Miss. Compared to a year ago, business orders for durable goods are up 7.7 percent. AP

May orders for durable goods rise 3.6 percent

By Martin Crutsinger

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. businesses stepped up their orders for long-lasting **manufactured goods** in May, and a gauge of their investment plans **rose** for a **third** straight month.

The Commerce Department said Tuesday that **orders** for durable goods rose **3.6** percent, matching April's gain. Most of the increase **was** due to a surge in commercial aircraft orders, which tend to fluctuate sharply from month to month. Still, businesses also **ordered** more computers, communications equipment, machinery and metals.

A category of **orders** that's viewed as a proxy for business investment plans — which excludes the volatile **areas** of transportation and defense — **rose** 1.1 percent. That matched **similar gains** in April and March.

This category of **orders** hadn't **increased** for **three** straight months

since the fall of 2011. The **consecutive** increases raise hopes for a pickup in U.S. manufacturing in the **second** half of the year.

Some economists had feared that orders that reflect business investment **would be weak** in May.