

ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

MARCH 2014



Retail Sales Workers, 10 Years Later

WHAT'S INSIDE

A bigger decade for wages, income
Alaska's first responders



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Sean Parnell, Governor
Dianne Blumer, Commissioner

ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Sean Parnell, Governor
Dianne Blumer, Commissioner

March 2014
Volume 34
Number 3
ISSN 0160-3345

To contact *Trends* authors or request a free electronic or print subscription, e-mail trends@alaska.gov or call (907) 465-4500. *Trends* is on the Web at labor.alaska.gov/trends.

Alaska Economic Trends is funded by the Employment Security Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. It's published by the Research and Analysis Section.

Alaska Economic Trends is printed and distributed by Assets, Inc., a vocational training and employment program, at a cost of \$1.11 per copy.

Material in this publication is public information, and with appropriate credit may be reproduced without permission.

On the cover:
In Juneau, former Nugget Alaskan Outfitter employee Kaitlin Tarver helps customer Zeno Cole. Photo by Kim Andree

Dan Robinson
Chief, Research and Analysis

Sara Whitney
Editor

Sam Dapcevich
Cover Artist

Retail Sales Workers 10 Years Later	4
The career paths of those who worked retail in 2002	
Bigger Decade for Wages, Income	8
What Alaskans make grew more from 2002-2012 than in the '90s	
Alaska's First Responders	10
Jobs and wages for those who handle emergencies	

March Authors



Dan Robinson is an economist and chief of the Research and Analysis Section at the Department of Labor and Workforce Development in Juneau. To reach him, call (907) 465-6040 or e-mail him at Dan.Robinson@alaska.gov.



Neal Fried, a Department of Labor economist in Anchorage, specializes in the Anchorage/Mat-Su region's employment, wages, and the cost of living. To reach him, call (907) 269-4861 or e-mail him at Neal.Fried@alaska.gov.



Jack Cannon is a research analyst with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development in Juneau. He works on special projects. To reach him, call (907) 465-6030 or e-mail him at Jack.Cannon@alaska.gov.

Retail starts many Alaskans on a solid career path



**By Dianne Blumer,
Commissioner**

This month's *Trends* focuses on a study of retail sales workers in Alaska over a 10-year period, from 2002 to 2012. Alaskans who worked in retail sales in 2002 are now working in diverse occupations from retail managers to teachers to engineers.

Of those we located in 2012, 17 percent were still retail salespeople, often earning close to the state average wage for an occupation that is often part-time and flexible.

Retail sales is the occupation with the highest worker counts in Alaska and is often a first job for many Alaskans — including me. One of my first jobs was in a grocery store. I learned many practical skills such as punctuality, communication, and customer service skills. I also learned to commit to the job I was hired to do by learning all I could about how the store was run and who our customers were. These are the so-called “soft skills” that Alaska employers say are critical for young workers.

The retail sales study suggests what I've experienced — that entry-level, relatively low-wage jobs are a stepping stone that can lead to unlimited opportunities. The study also points out that Alaska has many high-wage occupations that don't require a four-year degree or higher.

Preparing a trained Alaska workforce and connecting them with employers is critical to maintaining our economic health. Alaska's workforce development system starts at the K-12 level and moves through postsecondary education and training.

Career and technical education is a critical component of our Alaska workforce investment system. CTE helps keep students in school, reduces dropout rates, improves grades, and increases entry into the workforce or postsecondary education.

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board recognizes the critical importance of career and technical educators in the state and is accepting nominations for two annual awards recognizing excellence at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

Last year, the AWIB named the awards to honor former Labor and Workforce Development Deputy Commissioner David G. Stone, whose life was cut tragically short in November 2012. David was a part of our Labor family, named to serve on the AWIB in 2002 and as deputy commissioner in 2008. He was a lifelong advocate for making Alaska a great place to live and work.

David G. Stone Secondary Career and Technical Education Instructor/Administrator of the Year Award

Individuals employed as full-time classroom/laboratory instructors or administrators in a secondary career and technical education program are eligible recipients for this award. Nominees' programs must be directly related to business/industry training and/or employment.

David G. Stone Postsecondary Career and Technical Education Instructor/Administrator of the Year Award

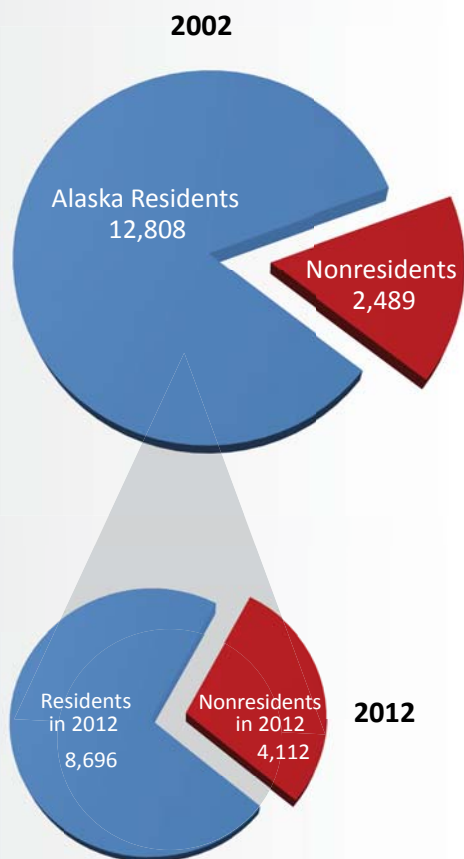
Individuals employed as full-time classroom/laboratory instructors or administrators in a postsecondary career and technical education program (other than at the baccalaureate level) are eligible recipients for this award. Nominees' programs must be directly related to business/industry training and/or employment.

Nominations for the prestigious awards must come from an Alaska business or industry and will be accepted through 5 p.m. on Friday, April 4. For more information, e-mail Louise.Dean@Alaska.Gov or go to Labor.Alaska.Gov/awib/awards.htm.

Retail Sales Workers, 10 Years Later

The career paths of those who worked retail in 2002

1 Most Are Still Residents Alaska's 2002 retail salespeople



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

More than 20,000 retail salespeople worked in Alaska in 2002, and for more than 15,000 of them, retail was their main job.

Ten years later, most of this group still lived in the state and about 17 percent of those who could be located¹ had made retail sales a continuing career. The others had moved on to more than 500 other occupations, from accounting clerks and roustabouts to registered nurses and attorneys.

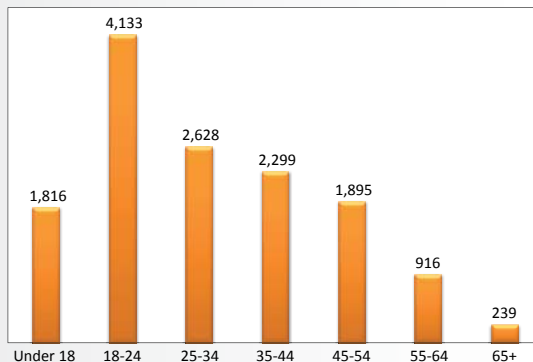
Retail salesperson is the occupation with the highest worker counts in the state and is often one of the first jobs a person has — training requirements and experience are minimal, and hours are more flexible than for most occupations. Looking at these workers and tracking their careers over a decade provides insight into how mobile Alaska workers are.

The 2002 group

Nearly 13,000 of the 2002 retail salespeople were residents and about 2,500 were nonresidents. (See Exhibit 1.) They were also predominantly

¹People who left retail sales occupations and went to work for the federal government, joined the military, or became self-employed could not be identified in 2012 beyond determining whether they were still Alaska residents.

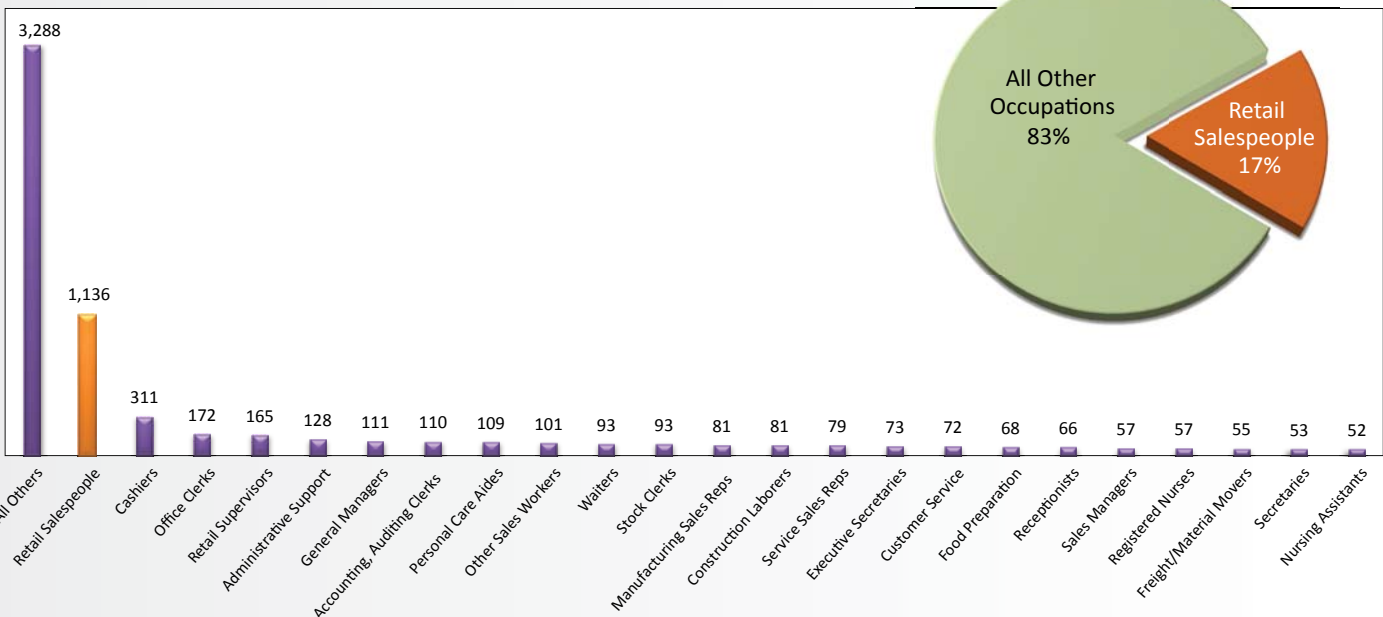
2 A Younger Workforce Alaska's 2002 retail salespeople



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

3 17 Percent* Still Worked in Retail Sales 10 Years Later

Occupations the 2002 group were working in 2012



*This percentage applies to the group who could be located in 2012, not the entire group of 2002 retail salespeople.
 Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

young, with a much larger percentage under 18 than for most other jobs. The largest age group was the 18 to 24 category, followed by gradually decreasing numbers for the older age groups. (See Exhibit 2.)

68 percent still residents

Ten years later, 68 percent of the group who were residents in 2002 were still residents. (See Exhibit 1.) That percentage is roughly in line with general migration patterns for Alaska, a state that typically has a higher percentage of its population moving in as well as out each year than any other state.

Among the workers who were under 18 in 2002, though, a smaller percentage had remained in Alaska by 2012. This is common for that age group, as people tend to move more during their college-age years and Alaska loses more in that age group than we gain.

The same is true for the two oldest age groups. Alaska consistently loses more people over age 50 to out-migration than it gains from in-migration. (For more about these older workers, see the box on page 6.)

What this research tells us applies to everyone in Alaska

Researchers may not ask themselves often enough about the practical use of their work. While it may be interesting to know that a small percentage of former retail salespeople became aeronautical engineers, how does that information help anyone?

Potential users of this type of research and analysis include:

Business owners and managers who employ retail salespeople: Knowing that more than four out of five moved into other occupations in a 10-year period lets employers know they should expect significant turnover. Business owners and managers will know best how much time and effort their company has to devote to the cycle of hiring, training, and replacing workers, but they may not know how typical their experience is. Business owners can more effectively deal with turnover and employee retention issues if they know to what extent the cause is broader than their own situation.

Students and job seekers wondering whether retail work is a dead end: Clearly it's not. This research shows that retail sales workers followed hundreds of career paths over a decade. In other words, there's no reason for a person to feel pigeonholed by an entry-level retail job. This is probably also true of other entry-level positions, such as those in food service.

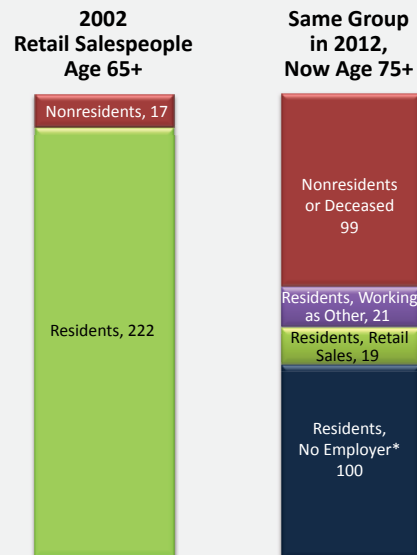
Customers and all of us. Some countries have a "servant class," but this research shows there's no permanent underclass of workers here. The man or woman who sold you your last car or pair of shoes may be operating on you or teaching your kids 10 years from now.

Senior citizens in retail sales

The group of retail salespeople who were 65 and older in 2002 was relatively small — 239 people — but an interesting group to examine in detail. Ninety-three percent were residents in 2002, a much higher percentage than for the group overall. This is probably because people in this age group are less likely to do seasonal retail work in the tourism industry, which draws primarily younger workers.

Forty-two percent of that original group were no longer residents by 2012. Some would have died, although not as many as one might expect given that a person's life expectancy increases to about 85 once that person makes it to age 65. A substantial number would have left Alaska to spend their golden years elsewhere.

Of the 2002 group, 140 out of 239 were Alaskans in 2012, and 40 of those were still working at age 75 and beyond, earning nearly \$600,000 that year in occupations ranging from substitute teachers to bank tellers. Nineteen were still retail salespeople, a group that earned an average of \$17,000 per worker, or almost \$322,000 in all.



*In addition to those who were retired or unemployed, this group could include self-employed and federal workers.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Most had changed occupations

Two findings jump out when looking at this group's careers in Alaska 10 years later: 1) more of them were still retail salespeople than anything else, but 2) only 17 percent were still retail salespeople. (See Exhibit 3.)

The first finding may seem intuitive because though many people change jobs over a decade, they don't necessarily switch occupations — and for those who do, it probably wouldn't be to one specific other occupation. The large number of retail opportunities is probably another reason retail salesperson was the largest single occupation 10 years later.

The second finding — that just 17 percent of the group were still retail salespeople — is revealing for what it says about the mobility of this occupation, and likely others, too.

500 different occupations in 2012

After retail salesperson, the occupation with the next highest number in 2012 was cashiers, followed by office clerks and retail sales supervisors. Like retail sales, the first two occupations provide plentiful job opportunities open to a broad pool of

applicants because they don't require specific training or education. For the third, it's not surprising some retail workers had moved into retail supervisory positions. (For more on similar jobs and advancement opportunities for retail salespeople, see the box on page 7.)

Though a large number had moved into related fields, the 2012 occupational range was broad. We found a few dozen engineers, for example, with specialties ranging from aerospace and environmental to mechanical and electrical. Ten years was enough for four people to have become practicing doctors and lawyers in the state — a journey that would have included time out of state because Alaska doesn't have a medical or law school — and for nearly 100 to become elementary, middle school, or secondary school teachers.

Nearly 60 were working as nurses in the state, 12 were police officers, and more than 50 were oil and gas roustabouts or drill and pump operators. A few also became practicing dentists, veterinarians, and physical therapists.

Leave and thrive or stay and thrive

Plenty of these workers had high-wage occupations 10 years after working retail. One of the more ex-

treme examples was the small group who became petroleum pump system operators earning more than \$125,000 on average in 2012, more than three times the statewide average.

Not surprisingly, those who became engineers, doctors, lawyers, and veterinarians earned more than average, but Alaska also has a significant number of high-wage occupations that don't require a bachelor's degree or higher. The 50 or so former retail salespeople who became electricians, insulation workers, plumbers, and pipefitters earned about \$80,000, more than twice the overall average.

The 1,136 workers who remained in retail — or returned to it; the data couldn't make that distinction — also fared relatively well in 2012. They earned an average of \$33,000, just a few thousand dollars below the state average for an occupation that's often part-time. In fact, the retail workers ages 35 to 44 in 2012 earned a few thousand more than the statewide average, at \$39,000. That group is more likely than the college-age or older workers to be in retail as a career rather than viewing it as a stepping stone or a part-time source of supplemental income.

What we don't know is whether that group earned higher than average wages because they were especially good at the skills required to succeed in retail sales, or whether these jobs provide regular advancement opportunities for workers who stay with them. It's most likely a combination of the two. Those conclusions would require a more targeted study, but the data suggest it's wrong to assume relatively low-wage, entry-level sales jobs don't lead somewhere meaningful for those who stick with them.

Career Lattice shows related work and ways to advance

The Alaska Career Lattice, an online career guidance tool, is somewhat related to the research this article uses. The lattice shows how connected occupations lead to or from each other as well as the skills, abilities, and knowledge they require. As the name suggests, the lattice shows lateral connections between similar occupations as well as those that lead up or down in terms of wages, responsibility, and education requirements.

Although many of the former retail salespeople this article examined ended up in occupations with no inherent connection to their work in retail, a significant number were in related jobs 10 years later. For example, retail salespeople who gain additional experience or education often transition to higher-paying jobs as customer service representatives, sales agents, or retail managers.

To see the occupations related to retail sales in more detail, see the retail salesperson lattice page at live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cl/cl.cfm?fo=412031.

For more on the Alaska Career Lattice and how it works, see the "Alaska Career Ladder Branches Out" article in the December 2011 issue of *Trends*: laborstats.alaska.gov/trends/dec11art2.pdf.

Bigger Decade for Wages, Income

What Alaskans make grew more from 2002-2012 than in the '90s

Alaskans' per capita income and average wages grew significantly more over the past decade than during the 1990s. When adjusted for inflation, per capita income increased 12 percent between 2002 and 2012, double its growth during the decade before. Adjusted wages grew by 5 percent after falling 8 percent between 1990 and 2000. (See Exhibits 1 and 2.)

Though neither are a perfect measurement of what Alaskans make, they provide some insight into an area's ability to generate income. And because wages make up nearly 57 percent of total personal income in Alaska, their trends tend to be similar.

What changed between the two decades

The differences between the two decades are partly due to the mix of industries that grew the most in each. During the 1990s, many of the higher-wage industries such as oil and timber declined or stagnated while some lower-wage industries

added a large number of jobs. For example, retail accounted for 25 percent of job growth in the '90s but grew far more slowly in the most recent decade. In contrast, the top-earning mining and oil industries added more jobs from 2002 to 2012.

Another difference was a shift in Alaska's median age, which rose from 29.4 years in 1990 to 34.1 in 2012. Workers tend to make more money as they gain experience, so a larger share of the working population in their higher-earning years could bump up average wages.

Ways to measure what Alaskans make

Total personal income is the most comprehensive measure because it includes income from all sources — wages from a job, transfer payments such as food stamps and other noncash benefits like Medicare, Alaska Permanent Fund dividends, and other types of dividend and interest income. It also covers every man, woman, and child in the state and not just workers.

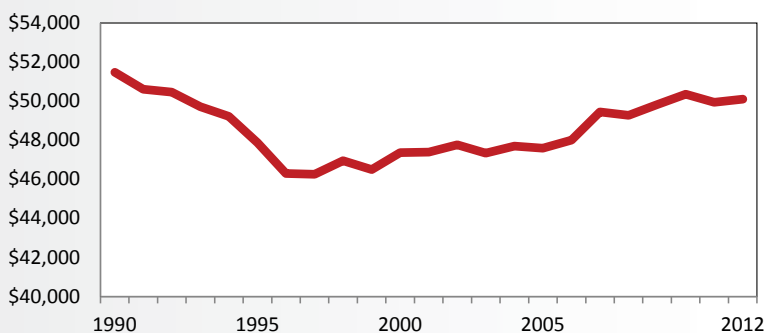
Economic conditions have a major effect on personal income levels, but demographics also play an important role. Family size, the number of dependents, the age of the population, and the percentage of the population in the workforce all influence per capita income.

For example, during the mid-1970s, Alaska's per capita income reached its pinnacle at 75 percent above the national average, largely driven by fat paychecks from oil pipeline construction. Back then, the demographic composition of the state pushed those numbers even higher because many wage earners were single men with no dependents.

Annual average wages only include what's paid by an employer, dividing total payroll by the average

1 Average Wages Up After '90s Decline

Alaska real* wages, 1990 to 2012



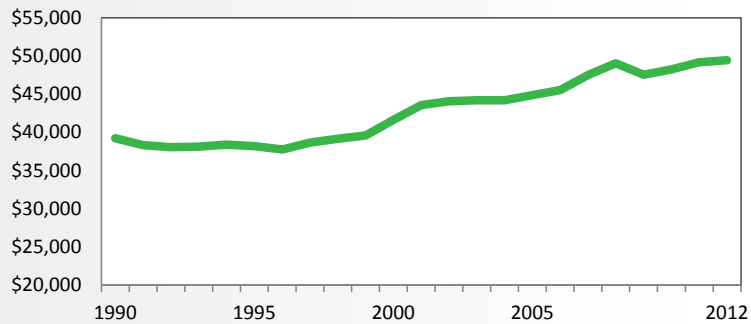
*Values are adjusted for inflation.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

number of yearly jobs. This is useful for determining what an industry pays on average.

Long hours, high wages, and a year-round workforce keep the oil and gas industry's average wages on top — nearly three times the overall average. On the other side of the spectrum are retail and the leisure and hospitality sector, which consists mostly of hotels, bars, and restaurants; these jobs typically pay less than average and are often seasonal or part-time.

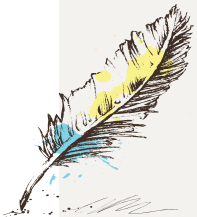
2 Income* Rose Faster in the 00s Alaska, 1990 to 2012



*Personal per capita income

Note: Values are adjusted for inflation.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis



This month in Trends history

MARCH 1968

March employment in Alaska continued its moderate upswing, which began in early February. The modest month-to-month improvement is evident in several areas of the state.

Juneau, where the Snettisham Dam project is slowly increasing operations and Ketchikan, where logging and pulp mill companies have accelerated their operations, have together contributed most to the improved employment picture.

Firm steps are being taken in Fairbanks to protect the city and surrounding area from floods. The Board of Army Engineers announced a \$113 million flood control project that will include a 124-foot earth dam on the Chena River, a 68-foot dam on the Little Chena River, and nearly 27 miles of levees on the Tanana and Chena rivers, but no announcement was made of the commencement date.

The State of Alaska provided an incentive to stimulate further interest in the Bristol Bay area by releasing for competitive bidding 350,000 acres of offshore land for petroleum leasing. The oil leases are the first the state has ever offered in the area, which extends from Port Heiden to Port Moller.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development has published *Alaska Economic Trends* as far back as 1961, and other labor market summaries since the late 1940s. Historical *Trends* articles are available at labor.alaska.gov/trends as far back as 1978, and complete issues are available from 1994.

Alaska's First Responders

Jobs and wages for those who handle emergencies

Alaskans trained to respond quickly to emergencies routinely put themselves at risk to protect the lives and property of the rest of us. In 2012, Alaska had 3,788 workers who could be considered “first responders,” including police and troopers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and emergency dispatchers. (See Exhibit 1.)

The category doesn't include the state's 88 village public safety officers, but this uniquely Alaskan job merits mention. VPSOs live in rural areas and respond to public safety emergencies. (See Exhibit 2.) They differ from police officers in that they require less training and they're unarmed, something that could change under a bill the Alaska Legislature is considering.

Who they are

Of the 3,788 first responders in 2012, close to half were police or troopers, 30 percent were firefighters, and about 11 percent each were EMTs/paramedics and dispatchers.

All of these workers are trained in some form of urgent medical care and accident response. Emergency dispatchers, also known as 911 operators, aren't physically present at accident scenes or other traumas, but they're often the first point of contact in an emergency.

Most first responders work for local or state government and they're mostly men — about 75 percent — with an average age of 39.5 years.

Jobs, wages have grown overall

This group of occupations grew 4.3 percent from

1 First Responders' Jobs and Wages Alaska, 2012

Job	Workers	Total Wages	Avg Annual Wages
Police and Troopers	1,806	\$121,481,078	\$67,265
Firefighters	1,146	\$66,446,049	\$57,981
Dispatchers	433	\$19,243,055	\$44,441
EMTs and Paramedics	403	\$17,767,698	\$44,089

Source: Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

2008 to 2012, or by 156 jobs — noticeably higher than the 2.9 percent growth for all jobs in Alaska.

Total first responder wages grew over that period by more than 18 percent, from \$190 million to \$225 million. The average wage increased by 13.9 percent, or \$7,100.

Police, troopers, and VPSOs

Local police make up roughly two-thirds of law enforcement personnel in the state, and the rest are Alaska State Troopers. These officers are the largest share of first responders, but their numbers have dropped by 3.3 percent in recent years, from 1,867 in 2008 to 1,806 in 2012. The declines were mainly among police, as some local governments cut public services when revenue was thin. State troopers' numbers have stayed fairly flat.

Though police and troopers are needed everywhere, their distribution varies. (See Exhibit 3.) For example, Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough had more than half the state's population in 2012 but only about 40 percent of the state's police and troopers. Urban areas can be serviced by fewer officers per resident than more

2 Communities with Village Public Safety Officers

January 2014



Note: Anchorage and some other regional centers have no VPSOs, but have some VPSO administration personnel.
 Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and Department of Public Safety, Alaska State Troopers Division

sparsely populated areas. The rural Northern Region had less than 4 percent of the state's population but nearly 9 percent of its police and troopers.

Police and troopers were the highest paid among first responders, earning an average of \$67,265 in 2012. They were also the oldest, with an average age of 40.4.

Of the state's 1,806 officers, 300 were supervisors. Their average age was 45, and they made \$87,778.

All of these earnings were a big jump from 2008 — more than 22 percent — and the biggest wage increase among all first responders. (See Exhibit 4.)

3 First Responders by Region

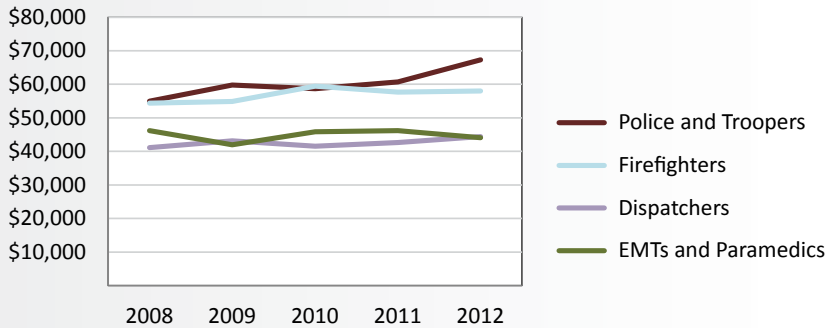
Alaska, 2012

	Police/ Troopers	Firefighters	Dispatchers	EMTs and Paramedics	VPSOs (as of 1/14)
Total	1,806	1,146	433	403	88
Northern	158	43	30	79	16
Interior	191	203	62	86	13
Southwest	272	60	59	39	41
Anchorage/Mat-Su	715	481	132	127	**
Gulf Coast	185	157	80	15	9
Southeast	283	112	70	56	9
Unknown	2	90	0	1	

Notes: Anchorage and some other regional centers have no VPSOs, but have some VPSO administration personnel. VPSO data are as of January 2014.
 Sources: Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, and Department of Public Safety, Alaska State Troopers Division

4 Officers' Wages Jumped Recently

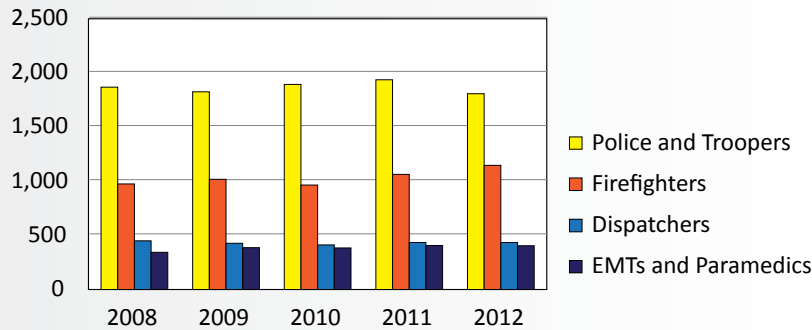
Wages of Alaska's first responders, 2008 to 2012



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

5 EMTs, Firefighters Grew Most

Alaska's first responders, 2006 to 2012



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Most Alaska police and troopers train at the Alaska Department of Public Safety Academy. The department's Alaska Law Enforcement Training is a 15-week residential program. Troopers attend an additional three weeks for the Trooper Basic Course.

Village public safety officers work under troopers' direction after completing 12 weeks of training at the academy. The VPSO program is financed by state funds administered through regional Native corporations, which assess villages' needs and work with troopers to select communities to participate.

VPSOs are "jacks of all trades" in their villages, responding to a variety of emergencies outside ba-

sic law enforcement. They help with search and rescue, fire protection, emergency medical assistance, and crime prevention. About 48 percent worked in Southwest communities in 2012, and less than 10 percent were in Southeast.

As of January 2014, 88 of the 116 authorized VPSO positions were filled. Data on total earnings weren't available, but VPSOs make \$25 per hour and have some overtime opportunities.

Firefighters

Alaska gained 171 firefighters from 2008 to 2012, or 18 percent, largely to meet the needs of a growing population. (See Exhibit 5.) The growth may also be part of a national trend — fewer people now join as volunteers, prompting fire services to hire more career firefighters.

Of the 1,146 firefighters in 2012, more than 70 percent worked for local governments, 20 percent for private and Native corporations, and the remainder for the State of Alaska.

Anchorage/Mat-Su had more than 45 percent of the state's paid firefighters, far more than any other region. In general, rural areas rely more on volunteers. The Anchorage area, except for Chugiak and Girdwood, uses only full-time paid firefighters.

Though firefighting employment increased faster than that of police and troopers, wages grew slower. Firefighters earned about 7 percent more in 2012 than they did in 2008, for an average of \$57,981. The 144 supervisors earned \$81,483 on average.

The average age for all firefighters was 39.3, and the supervisors averaged 46.9 years.

Unlike police and troopers, firefighters don't have a training academy in the state. Many train as volunteers for a community fire service and eventually make it a career. The Anchorage Fire Department sometimes trains recruits on site.

EMTs and paramedics

Like firefighters, the number of EMTs and para-

medics increased by 18 percent over the five-year period, to 403. Most worked for private businesses such as ambulance companies, hospitals, and oil-and-gas related companies. Less than 20 percent worked for local governments.

In general, rural areas need more emergency medical personnel per person. The Northern Region had nearly 20 percent of the state’s EMTs and paramedics in 2012, with many of those working for oil and gas companies on the North Slope.

This group’s wages dropped between 2008 and 2012 by about 4 percent to an average of \$44,089 a year. Lower wages may be a matter of supply and demand, as EMT training is relatively easy to attain in a short period of time.

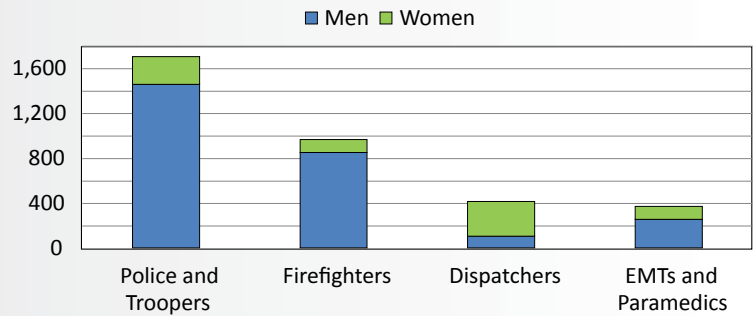
EMTs and paramedics need different training to become certified. All paramedics are EMTs, but not all EMTs are paramedics. Basic EMT-1 in Alaska requires successful completion of a 120-hour course plus CPR certification, training that’s available throughout Alaska.

Paramedics require more extensive training, roughly equivalent to an associate degree, and are allowed to perform more complex medical tasks. Training to be a paramedic is available at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Kenai Peninsula College. Some paramedics can also train EMTs.

Dispatchers

Emergency dispatchers usually refer calls to police, fire services, or ambulance services, but they often give life-saving advice over the phone.

6 Mainly Men, Except Dispatchers Alaska’s first responders, 2012



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Because of their position on the response chain, emergency dispatchers are sometimes called the *first* first responders.

Rural areas typically require proportionally more dispatchers, but dispatchers are more evenly spread throughout the state because this first point of contact is necessary regardless of population.

Dispatch employment declined slightly between 2008 and 2012, from 448 to 433. Seventy-five percent worked for local government in 2012 and most of the rest worked for the state. Though their numbers went down, their pay went up by about 8 percent to an average of \$44,441.

Emergency dispatchers were the only part of this group with more women than men, and considerably so — three out of four were women. (See Exhibit 6.)

Trends Index 2013

January

Employment Forecast for 2013

Employment Scene: Economists had a tougher job forecasting in recent years

February

Alaska's Hispanic Population: Largest U.S. minority is a growing part of Alaska

The Matanuska-Susitna Boom: Borough's growth continues to eclipse rest of state
Accountants and Auditors: A profile of jobs and wages in Alaska

Employment Scene: Food and drink manufacturing outside of seafood

March

The Labor Force Participation Rate: Aging population a major part of recent declines

The Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area:

Communities spread far across Interior

Home-Grown Workers: Comparing those who lived here as kids to those who didn't

Employment Scene: Determining where job losses and gains come from

April

The Alaska Native Population: Steady growth for original Alaskans through years of change

Big Changes for the Information Industry: Newspapers decline as online content increases

Alaska's IT Workers: The jobs and earnings of computer workers

Employment Scene: Alaska has the nation's

highest percentage of veterans

May

Alaska's Mining Industry: Strong growth in jobs, wages, and production value

A Look at New Resident Workers: Jobs and wages of nonresidents who stay in Alaska

Employment Scene: What drives various states' unemployment rates

June

Alaska's Oil and Gas Industry: A look at jobs and oil's influence on the economy

Homer Not Just a Fishing Town: An economically diverse city at the end of the road

Employment Scene: Alaska's income inequality the second lowest in the U.S.

July

The Cost of Living in Alaska: Inflation rose modestly in 2012

Alternate Measure of Unemployment: Six rates measure different underemployed groups

August

Job Hoppers in Alaska: How many there are and what they have in common

Rent Increases 5 Percent from 2012: Statewide median for all units now \$1,119 per month

Spotlight on Kodiak Island Borough: Group of islands among world's seafood capitals

September

Anchorage Neighborhoods: Great diversity within Alaska's largest city

Water Transportation in Alaska: Small share of jobs but crucial to economy

The Marine Highway System: Jobs and ridership on Alaska's ferries

October

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta: A look at the Wade Hampton and Bethel census areas

Federal Civilian Jobs in Alaska: Small share of employment brings in over \$1 billion a year

Personal Transfer Payments: Types of income outside regular employment

November

Fishing Jobs Up Slightly in 2012: Gains in other fisheries offset salmon job losses

Alaska's Salmon Hatcheries: Hatchery fish enhance sport, commercial harvests

Sitka's Diverse Economy: Fishing town returns to its roots after end of timber era

December

The Military and Alaska's Economy: Role waxes and wanes, but it's always a major player

Workplace Deaths in Alaska: Long-term decline in fatalities continues

Alaska's 'Young' Housing: Unlike the U.S., most homes were built in the '70s and '80s

Legal Services in Alaska: Most law firms are small, centered in Anchorage

Numbers delayed each February

Because of the annual benchmarking and revision process, the data the Department of Labor typically uses to generate the monthly unemployment rate and job numbers were not available before publication of this month's *Trends*. We will release two months' employment statistics and unemployment rates in March.

Safety Minute

First responders' safety critical at accident scenes

The quick actions of a first responder on the scene of an emergency can make the difference between life and death for an accident victim, but first responders' safety is critical so they don't become victims as well. Before entering an accident area, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you have the skills necessary to provide adequate and competent assistance without creating additional risk for yourself and others?
- Are you equipped with the personal protective equipment necessary to enter the accident scene?
- Do you have the training and skill to determine if the site is still dangerous?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, you're better off immediately reporting the emergency to the proper authorities and serving as initial observer. It's natural to want to rush to a person's aid, but that can ex-

pose you and other first responders to unknown hazards if you're unprepared or unqualified to respond.

Remember, the basic rules of responding to an accident scene are to first, keep yourself safe; and second, call 911. Only then should you assess the situation and assist those in need.

For more information on what you can do as a first responder or where to receive first responder training, contact your local fire/emergency medical services department, the American Red Cross Web site at www.redcross.org, or the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration Web site at www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/index.html.

Safety Minute is written by the Labor Standards and Safety Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Employer Resources

Fidelity bonding helps job seekers as well as employers

Fidelity bonding is a form of insurance that allows employers to hire from a larger pool of qualified applicants without putting themselves at financial risk. Obtaining this free bond allows the employer to focus on a worker's skills and productivity while being protected from potential worker dishonesty on the job.

There is no paperwork for the employer or the prospective employee to complete. The bonds are issued in increments of \$5,000 and provide six months of insurance coverage, with larger bonds issued on a case-by-case basis. Employers may also use bonding to promote a current employee to a more responsible position without exposing the company to risk.

Bonding is a reemployment tool that removes a significant barrier for applicants who may otherwise have a difficult time getting a job. Bonding is a tool for re-entry for ex-offenders, former addicts, those with poor credit or a

history of bankruptcy, those with dishonorable discharges from the military, and economically disadvantaged people who lack a work history.

The Fidelity Bonding Program is administered by the Employment Security Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. It began as a federal program in 1966, and states began administering their own programs in 1998. The program coordinator issues fidelity bonds from Travelers Property Casualty at no cost to the employer or the job seeker.

Employers seeking bonding insurance can call their closest Alaska Job Center. To find the nearest job center, go to jobs.alaska.gov/offices/ or call (877) 724-2539. For more information about the program, visit the Fidelity Bonding Web site at labor.alaska.gov/bonding.

Employer Resources is written by the Employment Security Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.