

# New Hires in Alaska

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## A window on job opportunities

**T**he workforce is dynamic. Businesses open, close, expand, and contract. One means of measuring business activity in the state is the New Hires Quarterly Report. Examining employers' quarterly unemployment insurance contribution reports can yield a count of job opportunities in Alaska and identify hiring trends. These are then used by state agencies and others to develop training and educational programs. This article examines hiring activity for 1999, focusing on occupations with the greatest number of new hires.

In a change from previous new hire articles, occupations will be analyzed at the most detailed level available. Occupations are based on the *Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 1980*, which lists 664 occupational classifications at the detailed, four-digit code level. These are summarized into 60 major groups with two-digit codes. Providing the information in this way better identifies the primary occupations for entry into the workforce. At this level of detail, anomalies can occur due to miscoding or missing information. These are eliminated when data is summarized into broader categories. The choice of occupational classification is the responsibility of the employer based on the worker's job duties. Two employers in the same industry may code similar jobs differently. Moreover, some employers fail to submit occupational classifications for their employees. These factors affect any analysis of occupations.

## Hiring status

Workers can be categorized as newly hired, rehired, and those who remained with their employer. To determine the hiring status, each worker is matched with an employer who reported wages during the quarter. The wage records for each of these worker-employer relationships are compared to the four previous quarterly filings to determine if an employee is new to a particular company. If so, the employee is counted as a new hire. (See Methodology, page 13.)

## Employment by Hire Status 1999



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

- **New hires** are those worker-employer relationships where the employer did not report wages for the worker in any of the previous four quarters.
- **Rehires** are those employees that worked discontinuously for the employer in at least one, but not all, of the previous four quarters.
- **Continuing workers** are those with consecutive earnings with the same employer in each of the previous four quarters.

The proportion of new hires in the workforce has remained at a constant level since the series began. Nearly one in five workers (18.7%) is a new hire at some point during the year. (See Exhibit 1.) In 1999, there were 242,330 new hires out of 1.29 million employee/employer pairings. Rehires account for another 59,813 hiring events.

## Hiring activity is seasonal

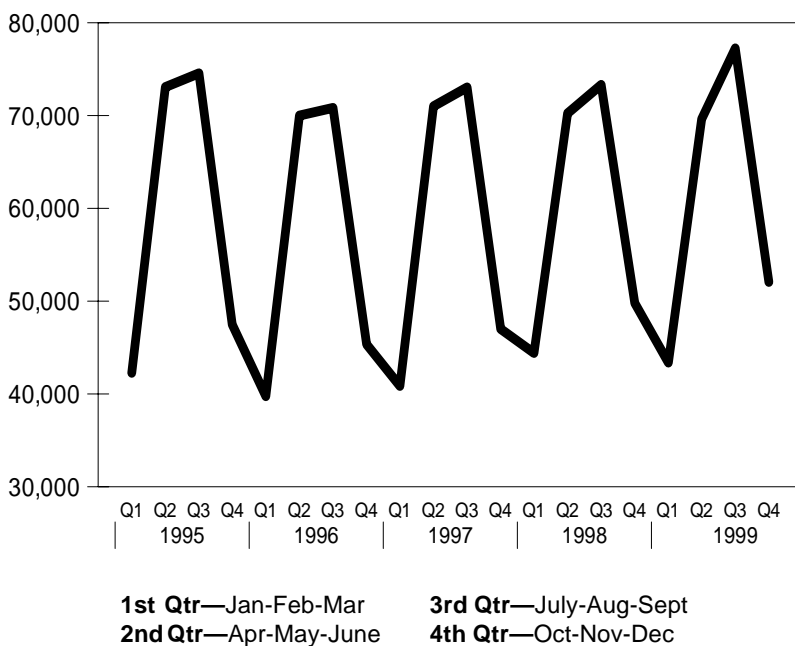
Typically, new hire activity is greatest in the second and third quarters of any given year. (See Exhibit 2.) Job seekers found their prospects in the third and fourth quarters of 1999 improved over those quarters in 1998, while the first and second quarters were flat compared to the prior year. New hire activity is seasonal for many positions. Historically, the first quarter of the year has the lowest new hire rate (the number of new hires divided by total employment). In the first quarter of 1999, only 14.9% of the workforce were new to their employers. In contrast, the second and third quarter new hire rates were 20.8% and 21.9%, respectively. Seafood processing, construction, retail trade, and hotel and lodging jobs all peak in the second and third quarters. Health services, legal services, and finance related positions are relatively stable in comparison. Less hiring activity takes place in higher paying occupations such as attorneys, doctors, and supervisory positions. Much more takes place in lower paying jobs such as laborers, retail salespersons, and food service occupations. (See Exhibit 3.)

## Top ten occupations

Leading occupations for new hire activity are typically unskilled, low paying, entry level jobs. The top ten new hire occupations for 1999 represent nearly one-third of the total new hires in the state. Twenty-eight percent of the workers in the top occupations were newly hired, compared to 18 percent for all employees. The rehire rate in this top ten is also higher than for workers in all occupations (7.0% for top occupations versus 4.6% for all employees).

Four of the top ten occupations are in the service sector while two are in the handlers and laborers category. Exhibit 4 lists the ten occupations with the most new hires for calendar year 1999.

## 2 New Hires by Quarter 1995 to 1999



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

# New Hires by Occupation Group Alaska 1999



| Occupation Group   | Total 1999     | 1st Qtr       | 2nd Qtr       | 3rd Qtr       | 4th Qtr       |
|--|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Service Workers, except Protective and Private Household | 47,979         | 7,874         | 15,555        | 14,250        | 10,300        |
| Administrative Support                                   | 28,950         | 6,545         | 7,836         | 7,612         | 6,957         |
| Handlers and Laborers                                    | 26,254         | 4,032         | 8,004         | 8,818         | 5,400         |
| Retail Salespersons                                      | 18,708         | 3,199         | 5,601         | 5,158         | 4,750         |
| Fabricators, Assemblers, and Hand Workers                | 16,064         | 4,328         | 2,760         | 8,121         | 855           |
| Construction Trades                                      | 13,147         | 1,816         | 3,690         | 4,822         | 2,819         |
| Transportation   | 7,430          | 1,217         | 2,467         | 2,301         | 1,445         |
| Mechanics and Repairers                                  | 5,742          | 1,056         | 1,847         | 1,558         | 1,281         |
| Teachers, except Postsecondary                           | 4,276          | 816           | 694           | 1,366         | 1,400         |
| Management Related Occupations                           | 3,442          | 930           | 839           | 877           | 796           |
| Officials and Administrators, except Public Admin.       | 2,956          | 713           | 793           | 800           | 650           |
| Protective Services                                      | 2,906          | 572           | 757           | 914           | 663           |
| Helpers  | 2,667          | 501           | 785           | 854           | 527           |
| Material Moving  | 2,269          | 388           | 700           | 802           | 379           |
| Social, Recreation and Religious Workers                 | 2,051          | 421           | 525           | 621           | 484           |
| Other Agricultural workers                               | 1,807          | 227           | 836           | 498           | 246           |
| Health Technologists and Technicians                     | 1,353          | 243           | 336           | 425           | 349           |
| Registered Nurses  | 1,220          | 249           | 338           | 339           | 294           |
| Postsecondary Teachers                                   | 1,055          | 296           | 164           | 377           | 218           |
| Miscellaneous  | 900            | 148           | 233           | 252           | 267           |
| Precision Production                                     | 896            | 207           | 227           | 245           | 217           |
| Writers, Artists and Performers                          | 863            | 161           | 275           | 236           | 191           |
| Engineers, Surveyors and Architects                      | 848            | 169           | 236           | 248           | 195           |
| Forestry and Logging Workers                             | 808            | 62            | 280           | 322           | 144           |
| Technicians, except Health, Eng. or Science              | 798            | 194           | 209           | 228           | 167           |
| Services Salespersons                                    | 768            | 324           | 120           | 157           | 167           |
| Machine Operators and Tenders                            | 751            | 148           | 243           | 168           | 192           |
| Engineering Technologists and Technicians                | 651            | 100           | 194           | 222           | 135           |
| Sales Related Workers                                    | 639            | 121           | 145           | 183           | 190           |
| Pharmacists, Therapists and Physician's Assistants       | 610            | 135           | 116           | 191           | 168           |
| Non-Retail Commodities Salespersons                      | 551            | 132           | 141           | 143           | 135           |
| Extractive Workers                                       | 514            | 81            | 214           | 134           | 85            |
| Fishers, Hunters and Trappers                            | 510            | 78            | 99            | 265           | 68            |
| Plant and System Operators                               | 506            | 109           | 147           | 140           | 110           |
| Marketing and Sales Supervisors                          | 454            | 98            | 126           | 131           | 99            |
| Editors, Reporters and Public Relations                  | 448            | 111           | 114           | 119           | 104           |
| Admin. Support Supervisors                               | 393            | 66            | 94            | 168           | 65            |
| Private Household Workers                                | 388            | 87            | 101           | 106           | 94            |
| Public Administrators and Officials                      | 300            | 68            | 72            | 65            | 95            |
| Physicians and Dentists                                  | 294            | 62            | 58            | 102           | 72            |
| Athletes and Related Workers                             | 274            | 59            | 109           | 55            | 51            |
| Science Technologists and Technicians                    | 268            | 50            | 74            | 93            | 51            |
| Construction and Extractive Supervisors                  | 261            | 41            | 96            | 77            | 47            |
| Natural Scientists                                       | 261            | 53            | 92            | 71            | 45            |
| Computer, Math and Operations Researchers                | 231            | 59            | 84            | 37            | 51            |
| Lawyers and Judges                                       | 162            | 54            | 28            | 34            | 46            |
| Mechanical and Repair Supervisors                        | 132            | 30            | 24            | 44            | 34            |
| Vocational and Educational Counselors                    | 125            | 18            | 22            | 55            | 30            |
| Handlers, Helpers and Laborers' Supervisors              | 104            | 7             | 38            | 37            | 22            |
| Production Inspectors, Testers, etc.                     | 92             | 18            | 29            | 39            | 6             |
| Social Scientists and Urban Planners                     | 75             | 15            | 13            | 29            | 18            |
| Librarians, Archivists and Curators                      | 74             | 12            | 17            | 22            | 23            |
| Machine Setup Operators                                  | 73             | 11            | 26            | 18            | 18            |
| Production Supervisors                                   | 68             | 12            | 18            | 32            | 6             |
| Transportation and Material Moving Supervisors           | 42             | 4             | 10            | 13            | 15            |
| Other Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners       | 39             | 8             | 9             | 13            | 9             |
| Farm Operators and Managers                              | 38             | 4             | 8             | 22            | 4             |
| Veterinarians  | 35             | 6             | 8             | 9             | 12            |
| Precision Production Supervisors                         | 10             | 1             | 4             | 4             | 1             |
| Unknown  | 36,800         | 4,852         | 10,936        | 12,192        | 8,820         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>242,330</b> | <b>43,398</b> | <b>69,616</b> | <b>77,234</b> | <b>52,082</b> |

Occupations are based on the two-digit occupational codes from the *Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 1980*. There are 60 of these occupational groups.

Fifteen percent of all workers' occupations were unreported by employers in calendar year 1999.

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

## Seafood workers led hiring in 1999

In spite of poor salmon catches in recent years and the difficulty processors had attracting employees, Cannery Workers, including Seafood Processors, led the state in hiring activity with 13,717 positions hired. Hiring peaks with the salmon harvest but also spikes in the first quarter for the winter fisheries. Over half the hiring in this occupation occurs in the third quarter. In contrast, the number of hires in the fourth quarter is the lowest of any of the top occupations.

Job openings are found throughout the coastal regions of Alaska, but primarily in Aleutians West, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Aleutians East Borough, Bristol Bay Borough, and Kodiak Island Borough. Cannery workers are part of the larger occupation group of Fabricators, Assemblers, and Hand Workers, and comprise 85 percent of the new hires in that category. While seafood processing has large numbers of job openings annually,

Alaskans occupy a minority of these jobs. Residents of other states fill 74 percent of the positions in this occupation.

Most entry-level seafood processing jobs involve working very long hours (up to 18 hours) while standing at a workstation in a cold, drafty, wet environment. (See inside back cover for more information on these jobs.) This type of work often involves removing the viscera (guts) and cutting off fish heads, fins, gills, or tail or other processing. It's not a glamorous job, and is sometimes referred to as working the "slime line." Seafood companies will often pay for transportation to the Alaska work site, provide food, gear, housing, laundry service, and training. Days and hours of work are not guaranteed in many instances. However, overtime is widely available. Newly hired seafood processing workers had the second highest median wage for the top occupations at \$2,420. Exhibit 5 shows a comparison of median wages for all employees in the top ten occupations. (See Median Earnings Definition.)

## 4 Top Ten Occupations Ranked by new hire activity in 1999

| Rank | Occupation                                   | New Hires |         |         |         |         | All Workers<br>1999 | % New<br>Hires<br>1999 |
|------|--|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------|------------------------|
|      |  | 1st Qtr   | 2nd Qtr | 3rd Qtr | 4th Qtr | 1999    |                     |                        |
| 1    | Cannery Workers, incl. Seafood Processors    | 3,902     | 2,199   | 7,079   | 537     | 13,717  | 39,659              | 34.6                   |
| 2    | Manual Occupations, Not Elsewhere Classified | 1,654     | 3,386   | 3,346   | 1,997   | 10,383  | 28,502              | 36.4                   |
| 3    | General Office Occupations                   | 1,977     | 2,551   | 2,510   | 2,363   | 9,401   | 50,014              | 18.8                   |
| 4    | Sales Clerks                                 | 1,113     | 2,437   | 2,368   | 1,992   | 7,910   | 35,151              | 22.5                   |
| 5    | Construction Laborers                        | 676       | 1,867   | 2,534   | 1,381   | 6,458   | 16,975              | 38.0                   |
| 6    | Waiters and Waitresses                       | 968       | 2,064   | 1,902   | 1,475   | 6,409   | 21,779              | 29.4                   |
| 7    | Carpenters                                   | 709       | 1,409   | 1,953   | 1,258   | 5,329   | 17,109              | 31.1                   |
| 8    | Janitors and Cleaners                        | 1,038     | 1,523   | 1,359   | 1,298   | 5,218   | 25,353              | 20.6                   |
| 9    | Combined Food Prep. and Service, Fast Food   | 773       | 1,425   | 1,324   | 1,175   | 4,697   | 13,160              | 35.7                   |
| 10   | Misc. Food and Beverage Prep. Occupations    | 596       | 1,136   | 1,157   | 874     | 3,763   | 12,502              | 30.1                   |
|      | Top Ten Occupations' Total                   | 13,406    | 19,997  | 25,532  | 14,350  | 73,285  | 260,204             | 28.2                   |
|      | All Occupations' Total                       | 43,398    | 69,616  | 77,234  | 52,082  | 242,330 | 1,295,619           | 18.7                   |

Occupations are based on the four-digit codes in *Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 1980*.

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

## Manual Occupations offer a variety of job options

Manual Occupations Not Elsewhere Classified came in second for new hires in 1999, with 10,383 workers hired. This occupation is one of two in the top ten included in the broader category of Handlers and Laborers and is responsible for 40 percent of the hiring in that category. New hires classified in this occupation don't fit easily into other occupation classifications and are typically low skilled, without special training, or hold positions that lend easily to on-the-job

training. An examination of the employers using this classification reveals that positions include advertising material distributor, porter, laundry laborer, campground worker, tailings dam laborer, honey bucket hauler, boat loader helper, and general laborer, to name a few.

For these manual occupations, hiring is slow in the first quarter, peaks in the second and third quarters, then falls off sharply for the fourth. Employment agencies are the most frequent employers for this job. (See Exhibit 6.) Typically, these positions have a short duration or limited hours, making it difficult to accumulate substantial wages. Not surprisingly, median earnings of \$951 for new hires in this occupation are lower than all but one of the other top occupations (fast food workers).

## General Office Occupations show strong hiring in all quarters

Part of the Administrative Support occupation group, General Office Occupations, is third on the list with 9,401 new hires in 1999. Employers use this classification for positions not classified in more detail. An examination of the employers using General Office Occupations reveals that this classification is composed

(continued page 10)

### Median Earnings Definition

Median earnings are derived from the four reporting quarters of 1999. Wages represent only one employer/employee relationship for a fixed period. Median earnings are obtained by ranking all the wage earners categorized in an occupation from lowest to highest and choosing the earnings that fall directly in the middle. Workers beginning employment in the third or fourth quarter of 1999 will have much lower median earnings than those workers beginning in the first quarter of the year. Workers employed with more than one employer or for different occupations will also be underrepresented. These earnings should not be construed as total annual earnings for the individual.

## Median Earnings for Top Ten Occupations

1999 **5**

| Rank | Occupation                                   | Median Earnings |             |             |
|------|--|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
|      |  | New Hires       | All Workers | % New Hires |
| 1    | Cannery Workers, Incl. Seafood Processors    | \$2,420         | \$3,947     | 61.3        |
| 2    | Manual Occupations, Not Elsewhere Classified | 951             | 1,463       | 65.0        |
| 3    | General Office Occupations                   | 1,671           | 4,212       | 39.7        |
| 4    | Sales Clerks                                 | 1,605           | 2,978       | 53.9        |
| 5    | Construction Laborers                        | 2,308           | 3,224       | 71.6        |
| 6    | Waiters and Waitresses                       | 1,129           | 1,833       | 61.6        |
| 7    | Carpenters                                   | 4,018           | 6,218       | 64.6        |
| 8    | Janitors and Cleaners                        | 1,068           | 2,600       | 41.1        |
| 9    | Combined Food Prep. and Service, Fast Food   | 869             | 1,222       | 71.1        |
| 10   | Misc. Food and Beverage Prep. Occupations    | 984             | 1,835       | 53.6        |
|      | Top Ten Occupations Total                    | 1,560           | 2,865       | 54.5        |
|      | All Occupations Total                        | 2,214           | 6,726       | 32.9        |

Occupations are based on the four-digit codes from *Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 1980*.

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

# 6 Top New Hire Occupations

By leading employers of new hires—1999

| Occupation   | Employer <sup>1</sup>                | Location                     | New Hires |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Cannery Workers, Including Seafood Processors</b> |                                      |                              |           |
|  | Trident Seafoods Corporation         | Aleutians East Borough       | 1,164     |
|  |                                      | Floating At-Sea Processor    | 228       |
|  |                                      | Ketchikan Gateway Borough    | 113       |
|  |                                      | Bristol Bay Borough          | 68        |
|  |                                      | Dillingham                   | 1         |
|  | Icicle Seafoods Inc.                 | Wrangell-Petersburg          | 674       |
|  |                                      | Kenai Peninsula Borough      | 259       |
|  |                                      | Floating At-Sea Processor    | 150       |
|  | Norquest Seafoods Inc.               | Wrangell-Petersburg          | 291       |
|  |                                      | Ketchikan Gateway Borough    | 235       |
|  |                                      | Bristol Bay Borough          | 147       |
|  |                                      | Aleutians East Borough       | 134       |
|  |                                      | Valdez-Cordova               | 87        |
|  |                                      | Sitka Borough                | 46        |
|  |                                      | Aleutians West               | 35        |
| <b>Manual Occupations, Not Elsewhere Classified</b>  |                                      |                              |           |
|  | Labor Ready Northwest Inc.           | Municipality of Anchorage    | 1,784     |
|  | AVCP Housing Authority               | Bethel                       | 287       |
|  | Snopac Products Inc.                 | Aleutians East Borough       | 170       |
|  |                                      | Floating At-Sea Processor    | 67        |
| <b>General Office Occupations</b>                    |                                      |                              |           |
|  | Adams & Associates Inc.              | Municipality of Anchorage    | 828       |
|  | Fairbanks North Star School District | Fairbanks North Star Borough | 487       |
|  | Personnel Plus Inc.                  | Municipality of Anchorage    | 346       |
|  |                                      | Denali Borough               | 5         |
|  |                                      | Kenai Peninsula Borough      | 3         |
| <b>Sales Clerks</b>                                  |                                      |                              |           |
|  | Wal-Mart Associates Inc.             | Municipality of Anchorage    | 724       |
|  |                                      | Kodiak Island Borough        | 211       |
|  |                                      | Matanuska-Susitna Borough    | 142       |
|  |                                      | Fairbanks North Star Borough | 121       |
|  | Lamonts Apparel Inc. <sup>2</sup>    | Municipality of Anchorage    | 273       |
|  |                                      | Fairbanks North Star Borough | 10        |
|  |                                      | Juneau Borough               | 8         |
|  |                                      | Matanuska-Susitna Borough    | 8         |
|  |                                      | Kenai Peninsula Borough      | 5         |
|  | Omni Enterprises Inc.                | Bethel                       | 79        |
|  |                                      | Dillingham                   | 27        |
|  |                                      | Bristol Bay Borough          | 12        |
|  |                                      | Kenai Peninsula Borough      | 11        |
|  |                                      | Juneau Borough               | 7         |
|  |                                      | Wade Hampton                 | 6         |
|  |                                      | Valdez-Cordova               | 2         |
| <b>Construction Laborers</b>                         |                                      |                              |           |
|  | Interior Region Housing Authority    | Yukon-Koyukuk                | 198       |
|  |                                      | Southeast of Fairbanks       | 50        |
|  |                                      | Fairbanks North Star Borough | 42        |
|  |                                      | North Slope Borough          | 100       |

## Top New Hire Occupations 6

By leading employers of new hires—1999 (continued)

| Occupation   | Employer <sup>1</sup>                     | Location                        | New Hires |
|--|---|---------------------------------|-----------|
|  | UIC Construction Inc.                     | Municipality of Anchorage       | 14        |
|  |   | Northwest Arctic Borough        | 7         |
|  |   | Matanuska-Susitna Borough       | 6         |
|  |   | Yukon-Koyukuk                   | 2         |
|  | Snowball Express Inc.                     | Municipality of Anchorage       | 125       |
| <b>Waiters and Waitresses</b>                                  |   |                                 |           |
|  | D of Alaska Inc. (Denny's)                | Municipality of Anchorage       | 70        |
|  |   | Fairbanks North Star Borough    | 48        |
|  | Glacial Reflections Catering <sup>3</sup> | Municipality of Anchorage       | 89        |
|  | Pepper Mill LLC                           | Municipality of Anchorage       | 81        |
| <b>Carpenters</b>  |   |                                 |           |
|  | Interior Region Housing Authority         | Yukon-Koyukuk                   | 69        |
|  |   | Southeast of Fairbanks          | 21        |
|  |   | Fairbanks North Star Borough    | 8         |
|  | McGraws Custom Construction Inc.          | Ketchikan Gateway Borough       | 67        |
|  |   | Wrangell-Petersburg             | 21        |
|  |   | Juneau Borough                  | 19        |
|  |   | Sitka Borough                   | 18        |
|  |   | Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan | 5         |
|  |   | Haines Borough                  | 1         |
|  | Alcan General Inc.                        | Fairbanks North Star Borough    | 50        |
|  |   | Municipality of Anchorage       | 32        |
| <b>Janitors and Cleaners</b>                                   |   |                                 |           |
|  | NPS Corporation                           | Fairbanks North Star Borough    | 120       |
|  |   | Municipality of Anchorage       | 87        |
|  | ABM Company of the West                   | Municipality of Anchorage       | 157       |
|  | Q1 Corporation                            | Municipality of Anchorage       | 122       |
|  |   | Fairbanks North Star Borough    | 21        |
| <b>Combined Food Preparation and Service, Fast Food</b>        |   |                                 |           |
|  | Denali Foods Inc. (Taco Bell)             | Municipality of Anchorage       | 452       |
|  |   | Fairbanks North Star Borough    | 149       |
|  |   | Matanuska-Susitna Borough       | 62        |
|  |   | Kenai Peninsula Borough         | 49        |
|  |   | Juneau Borough                  | 47        |
|  | McDonald's                                | Municipality of Anchorage       | 467       |
|  |   | Matanuska-Susitna Borough       | 173       |
|  | Tundra & Ice <sup>4</sup>                 | Fairbanks North Star Borough    | 539       |
| <b>Miscellaneous Food and Beverage Preparation Occupations</b> |   |                                 |           |
|  | Royal Fork Buffet Restaurants             | Fairbanks North Star Borough    | 94        |
|  |   | Municipality of Anchorage       | 104       |
|  | D of Alaska Inc. (Denny's)                | Municipality of Anchorage       | 70        |
|  |   | Fairbanks North Star Borough    | 63        |
|  | King Dimond Inc. (La Mex)                 | Municipality of Anchorage       | 55        |

<sup>1</sup> Employers who did not report employees' occupations or used other codes will not be represented even though they may, in fact, have workers in a particular occupation.

<sup>2</sup> Lamonts is now Gottschalks Inc.

<sup>3</sup> Glacial Reflections Catering is now Hotel Fourth Avenue, Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Tundra and Ice is now Interior Alaska McDonald's.

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

mainly of office or administrative clerks, police aides, and general office, realty, and clinic clerks. While firms employing 200 or more workers make up only 0.2 percent of businesses with general office workers, they are responsible for 25 percent of new hires in this profession.

General Office Occupations have the lowest new hire rate overall within the top occupations (18.8%) and the least change from quarter to quarter. Thirty-two percent of all Administrative Support hires are in General Office Occupations. The median wages for new hires are \$1,671, while for all workers in that profession they are \$4,212 (60.3% higher).

### Tourism boosts hiring of Sales Clerks

Next on the list of most frequently hired positions is the Sales Clerk occupation. Sales Clerks are

primarily found in retail trade establishments for which knowledge of the product sold is not a requirement. This occupation makes up 42 percent of the new hires for the larger Retail Salespersons category. Among the top ten occupations, Sales Clerks were least likely to have been hired by more than one employer in 1999 (3.3%). (See Exhibit 7.)

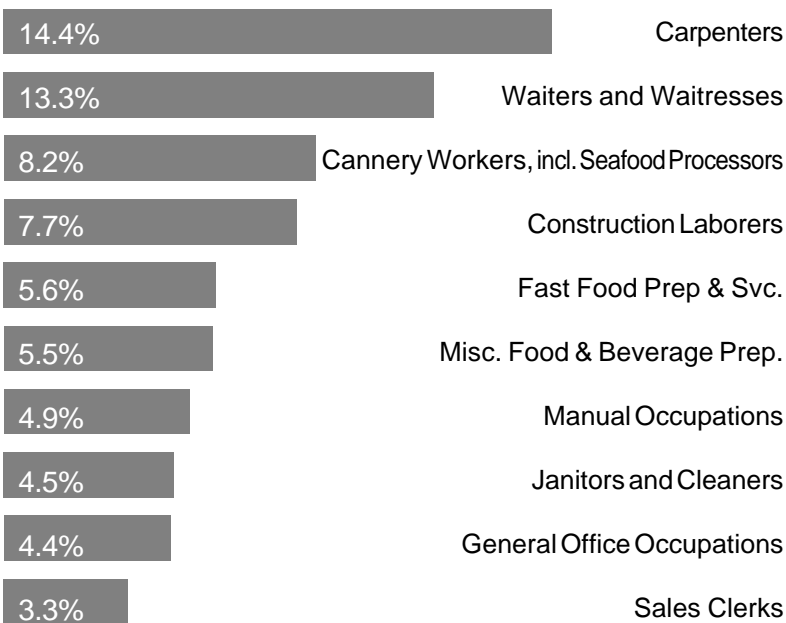
Typical job titles include salesperson, gift shop, produce, and floral clerks. There were 7,910 new hires for this occupation in the calendar year 1999.

While opportunities for Sales Clerk positions are concentrated in general merchandise stores, this type of work depends heavily on tourism. Miscellaneous retail stores, which includes gift and souvenir shops, hire more Sales Clerks than any other type of retail establishment (33.3%). Hiring for this occupation peaks in the spring quarter as employers gear up for the height of the tourism season. One in three clerks is newly hired in the second quarter. The rate drops to 24 percent for the third quarter as employers try to maintain staffing levels through the end of summer. Hiring drops to 22 percent but remains strong in the fourth quarter for the holiday season. The median earnings for this occupation are \$1,605.

### Construction Laborers have the highest hiring rate by occupation

The second of two classifications included in the broader category of Handlers and Laborers, Construction Laborers, hold position number five in our ranking of the top ten occupations for new hire activity. There were 6,458 new hires in this category for 1999, representing 25 percent of all Handlers and Laborers hired. While this occupation ranks fifth in terms of the number of new hires, it has the highest annual rate of new hires by profession at 38 percent. Hiring for this group peaked in the third quarter with 2,534 new workers added.

## Hired by Multiple Employers Top ten occupations—1999



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



Workers in this group include occupations assisting construction workers with building or repair work: general contractors of nonresidential buildings (14.3% of new hires); water, sewer, pipeline, and communications and power line construction (10.5%); and single-family home general contractors (9.5%). The median earnings for newly hired workers of \$2,308 are third highest for the top occupations, just behind Cannery Workers.

### Waiters and Waitresses rank sixth

The first of four occupations included in the broader classification of Service Workers, Waiters and Waitresses' jobs involve serving food and/or beverages (including alcohol) to patrons, answering inquiries pertaining to menu options, and accepting payment from patrons. Most positions also require some element of clean up and food preparation. This occupation is often appealing because workers are paid cash tips that supplement their low wages. Other appealing features are flexible work schedules and part-time employment.

The occupation had 6,409 new hires in 1999, with median earnings for new hires of \$1,129. Waiters and Waitresses follow Alaska's seasonal employment cycle with hiring strongest in the second quarter (35.2% new hire rate). Overall, this occupation makes up 22 percent of those employed in food and beverage occupations. (Food and beverage is a subset of the broad Service Workers category, and includes workers whose SOC codes range between 5210 and 5229.) The vast majority are found in eating establishments (67.4%). Hotels provide 13.5% of the job openings and drinking places 9%.

### Carpenters change employers more often

Rank number seven in the top ten list is the occupation of Carpenter, with 5,329 new hires in 1999. This profession, which includes master,

journeyman and apprentice levels, is the only one on our list that requires special skills and work experience. This is the main reason this worker earns more than the other newly hired workers on the list (\$4,018 median earnings).

Like Construction Laborers, Carpenters can work in nearly all industries. Carpenters differ from laborers, however, in the type of construction where most hiring occurs. One in two new hires for Carpenters takes place with general contractors building nonresidential buildings (28.2%) or single-family housing (22.1%). Carpentry work such as cabinetry, framing, trim, and joinery accounts for another 10.7% of new hires.

These workers tend to move around a lot. Once the building, home, or other project is finished, they move on to the next job, which commonly requires changing firms. While 93 percent of the workers in the top ten occupations were newly hired by only one employer in 1999, Carpenters held positions with as many as eight employers—more than any other job classification on the top ten list. Nearly 15 percent were hired two or more times. Due to the transient nature of their work, Carpenters are responsible for 41 percent of the new hires in their occupation group, Construction Trades. Not surprisingly, the employment cycle for Carpenters follows the same pattern as Construction Laborers, with most hiring occurring in the second and third quarters.

### Hiring for Janitors and Cleaners is stable

Rank number two in the broad Service Workers category is Janitors and Cleaners. They hold place number eight on the list of top ten occupations for new hires. This group includes workers who clean buildings, tend to furnaces and boilers, and perform routine maintenance activities. This job does not include Maids and Housemen who clean rooms in hotels, hospitals, and similar places. Window cleaner, floor waxer, janitor, custodian, chimney sweep, and caretaker are representative titles for this occupation.

New hires totaled 5,218 in 1999. One in five workers was newly hired. In comparison, the only occupational group with a lower new hire rate was General Office Occupations. This occupation does not experience large seasonal fluctuations. The median earnings for newly hired Janitors and Cleaners are \$1,068.

### Fast food jobs are in urban areas

Number three in the broad Service Workers category and number nine in the top ten list of occupations for new hire activity is the Combined Food Preparation and Service, Fast Food occupation. For this job, workers perform both food preparation and food service duties. Workers who are primarily cashiers or spend more than 80 percent of their time in food preparation are classified elsewhere. There were 4,697 new hires in the category for calendar year 1999. While this group makes up only 12.6% of the food and beverage workers, it was responsible for 16 percent of their new hires.

Nearly all of the hiring for this occupation occurs in the more populated areas of the state. Ninety-nine percent of all fast food workers hired in 1999 were in areas that had at least one urban city with a population greater than 5,000 and a population density of 2.2 persons per square mile or higher. While there is some fluctuation from quarter to quarter, overall the level of hiring for this job is stable with one in three workers a new hire. The median earnings for this occupation are the lowest of all the jobs in the top ten at \$869.

### Food and Beverage Preparation hiring peaks in third quarter

Rounding out the top ten occupations for 1999 and number four in the broad Service Workers category is the Miscellaneous Food and Beverage Preparation Occupations. This group includes workers with duties such as peeling vegetables, washing dishes, maintaining clean work areas, and other food service positions that are not

classified in another occupation. Representative job titles are kitchen, camp, and cook helpers, food order expeditor, food assembler, kitchen utility, and dishwashing machine operator. This job classification had 3,763 new hires. The median earnings are \$984.

Unlike the other two food service occupations in our list, Food and Beverage Preparation hiring peaks in the third, not second quarter. In fact, hiring in the fourth quarter is slightly ahead of the second quarter. This profession accounts for 13 percent of the hires for food and beverage workers. Seventy percent are hired in eating and drinking places and nearly ten percent in hotels and lodging establishments.

### The other end of the scale

As the top ten occupations list demonstrates, new hire activity is prevalent for entry level, low skilled positions. Workers in positions requiring professional degrees, licensing, high skills, or specialized experience have much lower rates of new hire activity. All of these professions have higher median earnings than the occupations in our top ten list. Not surprisingly, the occupations with the least hiring activity also have substantially lower employment levels than the jobs with the highest volume of new hires.

For employers having 25 or more employees, the occupations with the least new hire activity in 1999 are:

1. Precision Assemblers (Metal)
2. Rolling Machine Setup Operators
3. Slicing and Cutting Machine Operators
4. Correspondence Clerks
5. Art, Drama and Music Teachers (Post-secondary)
6. Boiler Operators (Low Pressure)
7. Managers of Livestock, Dairy, Poultry and Fish Farms
8. Supervisors of Adjusters, Investigators and Collectors

9. Physicists
10. Foreign Language Teachers (Post-secondary)

Physicists and Foreign Language Teachers had no new hires in 1999 although there are 25 or more positions in the state for each. The remaining occupations on the list each had one new hire in calendar year 1999.

## Summary

Alaska's highly seasonal economy continues to exert influence on the hiring cycle, with peak hiring taking place in the spring and summer months. Position openings most often occur for occupations requiring low skills or that are suitable for on-the-job training. While these occupations do not pay as well as others, they do offer entry into the workforce for unskilled, inexperienced workers, or those looking for part-time or temporary employment.

Additional analysis of Alaska's new hires can be found on the Research and Analysis web site at <http://www.labor.state.ak.us/research/research.htm>.

## Methodology

The new hires series is designed to measure job opportunities provided by both employee turnover and new job creation. Firms with employees working in Alaska are required to report social security numbers, occupation, work site location, and wages earned for each of their employees to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development on a quarterly basis. Fifteen percent of all workers' occupations were unreported by employers in calendar year 1999.

Workers who did not work for their current employer in any of the four previous quarters are considered new hires. No differentiation is made between openings created for workers in newly created jobs and those resulting from workers who vacated existing positions. Since the new hire report reflects both types of job opportunities, it should not be used to infer job growth. Federal workers, the self-employed, and unemployment insurance-exempt workers are excluded from the new hire analysis.

Employers report all employees who received wages during the quarter regardless of how long they were employed. For this reason there is no way to distinguish between workers who worked for one day or the entire quarter, full-time or part-time, or for regular pay or overtime pay. All are given equal weight in the analysis. This limits the results in two important ways. First, since employment figures indicate the total number of people who worked at any time during the quarter, figures derived from the unemployment insurance wage files will always be above average employment levels. Second, individual employees are counted more than once if they work for more than one employer. Therefore, workers who held multiple jobs at the same time are treated no differently than those who held only one job at a time but changed employers.