

Alaska Wage Rates

By John Van Houten

Everyone is interested in how much they earn and how that compares to other workers in the same occupation. Many jobseekers want to know if wages in other areas of Alaska will compensate them for the higher cost of living. New employers in Alaska are interested in what they will have to pay to attract qualified workers to their firm. Individuals interested in a career change want to know not only the employment opportunities associated with that career, but what that career will pay. As a result there is considerable demand for wage rate information.

Sources

Although there is no single source of all wage rate data there is a good likelihood that users can find the wage rates they need from among the four major published sources. The four sources are: 1) Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis' annual *Alaska Wage Rates*, 2) compilations of wage rates offered by employers who have placed job orders at Job Service offices throughout Alaska, 3) the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Area Wage Survey Alaska*, and 4) the Alaska Department of Labor pamphlet No. 600, *Laborers' and Mechanics' Minimum Rates of Pay*. 1/

Research and Analysis' annual wage rate survey provides rates for more than 200 occupations. The rates are from employers' pay schedules. They are compiled for Alaska statewide and six geographic regions.

Data from Alaska Job Service job orders are compiled and published for about 200 occupations. The rates are those which have been offered; the job openings may have gone unfilled or possibly were filled at negotiated higher rates. Job Service wage rates are published for Alaska statewide and for the local Job Service offices. In addition to those published, more detailed information is available for more than 1,200 specific Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) codes and are available on request.

1/ Copies of these publications are available from the Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section. The wage rates in Pamphlet No. 600, *Laborers' and Mechanics' Rates of Pay*, are prevailing union rates. Wage rates requested for specific occupations not listed in these sources may be available at Research and Analysis. Inquiries are invited.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Area Wage Survey, Alaska*, provides wage rates for a limited number of administrative support and clerical, maintenance, and service occupations. The Alaska area survey is one of many conducted throughout the United States and provides a means to make comparisons of one area with another. The Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Administration pamphlet No. 600, *Laborers' and Mechanics' Minimum Rates of Pay* gives the prevailing union rates.

Wage data from the first three sources mentioned above are illustrated in Tables 1 through 3.

Occupational Comparisons

A comparison of 1986 wage rates from Research and Analysis' *Alaska Wage Rates*, Job Service job order rates, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Area Wage Survey* is presented in Table 1. The BLS survey gives the highest average wage rate for nearly all occupations of the three sources. The higher rates for the BLS survey may reflect a bias resulting from their sample selection of firms that employ 50 or more employees.

Clerical and administrative support occupations listed in the Bureau of Labor Statistics survey are for entry-level or lower occupational levels (such as Accounting Clerk I) and comparable to entry-level Research and Analysis rates. BLS surveyed only two service occupations, guards and janitors, but the average rates for both are based on a large number of workers.

There is a major disparity among wage rates in the production/construction occupations. The BLS production/construction category rates were the highest of the three surveys, with the exception of maintenance repairers and electricians. Electrician is an occupation not directly comparable between surveys. Research and Analysis surveys for both commercial and residential rates whereas BLS combines the commercial and residential electrician information.

Average wage rates for Job Service job orders (Table 1) are the lowest for the occupations listed except those in the professional, paraprofessional, and technical category. Job Service job orders for professional, paraprofessional, and technical occupations may reflect a demand for experienced employees.

Few job orders for managers and administrator and only a limited number of job orders for professional occupations are placed with Job Service relative to the 47,000 job orders received. Filling posi-

tions in these categories are more likely to take place through promotion from within and contacts generated by advertising in trade journals or word of mouth among colleagues.

The rates listed for managers, administrators, and professionals often vary because of major differences in job duties, responsibilities, and experience and education requirements. On the other hand, workers in an occupation such as cannery worker are largely interchangeable and easily replaced, consequently uniform wage rates are more easily established for these occupations.

Trends

A comparison of wage rates from surveys conducted by Research and Analysis between 1982 and 1986 is presented in Table 2. Occupations are grouped in seven categories with representative occupations listed in each category. Most wage rates peaked in 1984 and 1985 and declined significantly by 1986.

Production and construction occupations have sustained the biggest decline over the five-year period. The drop began in several occupations in 1983 as the construction boom ended and spread to other occupations in the following years. Five of the ten occupations in production and construction have lower rates for 1985 than for 1982.

Regional Comparison

Comparisons of wage rates for selected occupations from Research and Analysis' 1986 wage rate survey for Alaska's six economic regions and statewide are presented in Table 3. The data is reliable, except for the data presented for the Northern region—the region for which there was the smallest sample and the least number of responses. Taking into consideration this caveat, the Northern region clearly averages the highest wages for the occupations shown in table 3. Of the 13 occupations reported for all six regions, ten occupations in the Northern region were the highest. The region's average rate for the 13 occupations was 17.5% higher than the statewide average.

The Southwest region, Gulf Coast region, and Interior region each had two or more occupations with the highest wage rates reported. High rates for the Interior region were clustered in the construction/operating/ maintenance category, explained in part by military construction at Fort Wainwright. Some rates appear anomalous, such as the unusually low wage rate for automotive mechanics in the Northern region. However, the small sample size for some occupations in some areas may account for these unusual rates.

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Table 1
Comparison of Alaska 1986 Wage Rates—Average Hourly Rates

Occupation	Research and Analysis' Survey, Statewide				Alaska Job Service Job Orders, Statewide		Bureau of Labor Statistics Area Wage Survey Alaska	
	Entry Level		Two Years Experience		Average	Number of Openings	Average	Number of Workers
	Average	Number of Firms	Average	Number of Firms				
Professional, Paraprofessional, and Technical								
Accountants & Auditors	\$13.28	54	\$15.79	56	\$13.39	51	\$ —	—
Computer Programmers	12.96	11	15.72	11	—	—	15.32	30
Drafters	9.98	23	12.42	27	11.06	53	18.24	18
Electrical & Electronic Engin. Techs.	13.57	21	16.14	20	14.70	28	—	—
Electrical & Electronic Engineers	13.93	16	17.09	16	—	—	—	—
Nurses: Licensed Practical	10.11	23	11.07	23	10.20	21	—	—
Nurses: Registered	12.11	44	13.66	48	12.33	90	—	—
Surveying & Mapping Scientists	16.39	15	18.82	18	—	—	—	—
Systems Analysts: Electronic Data Processing	15.53	4	17.51	3	—	—	18.06	10
Sales								
Cashiers	8.05	90	7.70	79	5.62	763	—	—
Salespersons: Parts	7.80	23	10.52	23	8.17	104	—	—
Salespersons: Retail	6.28	89	8.06	82	5.29	934	—	—
Stock Clerks: Sales Floor	6.18	38	8.02	31	5.90	88	—	—
Clerical and Administrative Support								
Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	8.84	171	10.79	163	8.13	563	9.13	7
Data Entry Keyers, Except Composing	7.69	31	9.38	29	7.35	175	8.38	48
File Clerks	6.87	20	7.92	19	5.96	105	7.03	52
Payroll & Timekeeping Clerks	9.34	18	11.69	17	9.08	35	11.52	74
Receptionists & Information Clerks	7.73	95	9.13	94	6.37	684	7.28	20
Secretaries	8.98	135	10.71	128	9.04	494	12.59	54
Switchboard Operators	7.36	30	8.71	27	7.39	46	8.03	63

Typists	7.41	31	6.73	28	6.05	394	8.75	16	
Service									
Service Bakers: Bread & Pastry	7.50	15	9.35	13	6.64	26	—	—	
Bartenders	7.57	56	8.89	48	6.74	241	—	—	
Cooks: Institutional & Cafeteria	8.74	34	9.10	30	8.25	211	—	—	
Cooks: Restaurant	7.07	28	8.67	27	6.59	812	—	—	
Guards & Watch Guards	7.64	13	9.42	11	6.21	330	7.08	277	
Janitors & Cleaners									
Ex Maids/Housekeeping	6.61	69	7.81	61	6.05	1,106	7.04	545	
Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	6.18	45	7.03	37	5.87	558	—	—	
Waiters & Waitresses	4.73	56	5.38	50	4.56	1,484	—	—	
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing									
Choke Setters	11.08	6	11.45	6	11.56	128	—	—	
Production/Construction/Operating/ Maintenance/Material Handling									
Cannery & Cold Storage Workers	5.66	29	6.67	27	6.60	7,571	—	—	
Carpenters	14.34	21	16.36	17	12.55	720	23.02	15	
Electricians	—	—	—	—	16.35	415	18.21	27	
Electricians: Commercial	17.65	14	19.77	9	—	—	—	—	
Electricians: Residential	11.65	4	13.77	4	—	—	—	—	
Helpers, Laborers, & Material Movers: Hand	8.60	35	10.35	34	6.66	3,844	15.66	233	
Maintenance Repairers: Gen. Utility	9.74	54	11.65	51	8.27	175	10.72	94	
Mechanics: Automotive	13.62	38	15.41	33	11.00	184	17.08	154	
Truck Drivers: Heavy or Tractor-Trailer	11.55	47	13.68	50	9.80	63	17.14	47	
Truck Drivers: Light— Incl Del/Route Workers	8.98	77	11.66	75	7.69	98	—	—	
Welders & Cutters	15.89	17	17.68	17	14.68	198	—	—	

— Incomplete data series or information not available.

Table 2
Wage Rates for Selected Occupations 1982-1986
Research and Analysis' Wage Rate Surveys

Occupations	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	% Change 1982-1986
Managers and Administrators						
Automobile Service Dept Managers	\$13.92	\$13.32	\$14.64	\$13.83	\$13.50	-3.0
Fast Food Restaurant Managers	7.82	8.08	7.30	7.88	7.58	-3.1
Merchandise Managers	10.18	11.21	13.05	9.61	9.39	-2.8
Wholesale Managers	11.40	11.18	12.49	13.73	13.24	16.1
Professional, Paraprofessional, and Technical						
Accountants & Auditors	11.57	14.44	12.60	12.82	13.28	14.8
Computer Programmers	9.51	11.71	11.91	12.27	12.95	36.3
Drafters	10.43	10.04	10.22	10.89	9.98	-4.3
Electrical & Electronic Engr. Techs	10.66	12.94	14.76	12.97	12.86	20.8
Electrical & Electronic Engineers	12.17	16.97	15.28	12.89	14.13	16.1
Nurses: Licensed Practical	8.21	9.25	9.59	9.47	10.11	23.1
Nurses: Registered	10.06	10.66	11.80	11.52	12.11	20.4
Surveying & Mapping Scientists	16.43	17.80	17.13	16.25	16.39	-0.2
Systems Analysts: Electronic Data Processing	11.49	14.10	16.75	14.44	15.53	35.2
Sales						
Cashiers	5.50	6.19	5.82	5.71	6.05	—
Salespersons: Parts	—	—	8.21	7.87	7.80	—
Salespersons: Retail	8.32	5.53	6.06	5.99	6.28	18.0
Stock Clerks: Sales Floor	5.91	5.82	6.06	5.85	6.18	—
Clerical and Administrative Support						
Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	8.09	8.72	8.65	8.59	8.84	9.3
Data Entry Keyers, Except Composing	6.41	6.91	7.85	7.70	7.69	20.0
File Clerks	5.30	5.69	6.42	6.37	6.87	29.6
General Office Clerks	6.93	7.50	7.10	7.30	7.47	7.8
Payroll & Timekeeping Clerks	8.39	8.80	8.72	9.81	9.34	11.3
Receptionists & Information Clerks	6.78	7.84	7.75	7.69	7.73	14.0
Secretaries	8.37	8.65	8.85	8.59	8.98	7.3
Switchboard Operators	6.34	6.92	7.39	7.52	7.36	16.1
Typists	6.61	7.46	7.48	6.94	7.41	12.1

Table 2
Wage Rates for Selected Occupations 1982-1986
Research and Analysis' Wage Rate Surveys (Continued)

Occupations	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	% Change 1982-1986
Service						
Bakers: Bread & Pastry	8.67	7.53	9.32	12.25	7.50	-13.5
Bartenders	7.07	7.49	7.71	7.42	7.57	7.1
Cooks: Institutional & Cafeteria	8.40	8.33	7.80	8.38	8.74	4.0
Cooks: Restaurant	7.22	7.17	7.78	7.35	7.07	-2.1
Guards & Watch Guards	6.72	7.50	8.19	7.39	7.64	13.7
Janitors & Cleaners, Ex Maids/Housekeeping	7.23	7.81	7.44	6.88	6.61	-8.6
Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	5.66	5.94	6.27	6.12	6.18	9.2
Waiters & Waitresses	4.54	4.52	4.71	4.79	4.73	4.2
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing						
Choke Setters	10.82	11.42	11.73	11.39	11.08	2.4
Production/Construction/Operating Maintenance/Material Handling						
Cannery & Cold Storage Workers	5.85	5.58	5.50	5.52	5.66	-3.2
Carpenters	14.18	16.67	18.53	16.09	14.34	1.1
Electricians: Commercial	—	20.60	19.31	19.69	17.65	—
Electricians: Residential	—	15.50	11.46	14.32	11.65	—
Helpers, Laborers, & Material Movers: Hand	9.40	10.01	9.80	9.42	8.80	-8.5
Machinists	11.25	13.43	14.47	15.57	14.43	28.3
Maintenance Repairers: General Utility	9.79	10.19	10.06	9.30	9.74	-0.5
Mechanics: Automotive	12.58	13.31	15.12	14.11	13.62	8.3
Truck Drivers: Heavy or Tractor-Trailer	12.15	13.06	14.26	14.64	11.55	-5.2
Welders & Cutters	17.30	17.30	19.43	16.99	15.89	-8.2

— Incomplete data series or information not available

Table 3
Alaska Wage Rates 1986
Regional Comparison
ANALYSIS

Occupations	Anchorage and MatSu Census Area		Interior Region		Southeast Region	
	Entry Level		Entry Level		Entry Level	
	Average	% of Statewide	Average	% of Statewide	Average	% of Statewide
Professional, Paraprofessional, and Technical						
Accountants & Auditors	\$12.03	90.6%	\$13.32	100.3%	\$12.20	91.9%
Nurses: Registered	12.11	100.0%	10.73	88.6%	12.68	104.7%
Sales						
Cashiers	5.39	89.1%	6.24	103.1%	6.31	104.3%
Salespersons: Retail	6.19	97.9%	6.54	104.1%	6.47	103.0%
Stock Clerks: Sales Floor	5.72	92.6%	6.93	110.8%	5.76	93.2%
Clerical and Administrative Support						
Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	8.01	90.6%	8.79	99.4%	8.89	100.0%
General Office Clerks	7.38	98.8%	7.57	101.3%	7.28	97.5%
Receptionists & Information Clerks	6.95	89.9%	7.18	92.9%	8.54	110.5%
Secretaries	9.08	101.1%	8.49	94.5%	8.72	97.1%
Typists	7.59	102.4%	6.95	93.8%	7.22	97.4%
Service						
Bartenders	6.95	91.8%	7.17	94.7%	7.73	102.1%
Cooks: Restaurant	6.95	92.8%	5.65	79.9%	7.35	104.0%
Janitors & Cleaners, Ex Maids/Housekeeping	6.46	97.7%	5.75	87.0%	6.82	103.2%
Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	6.09	98.5%	4.87	78.8%	6.12	98.0%
Waiters & Waitresses	4.33	91.5%	4.22	89.2%	5.12	108.2%
Production/Construction/ Operating/Maintenance/ Material Handling						
Carpenters	11.00	76.7%	17.65	123.1%	13.00	90.7%
Helpers, Laborers, & Material Movers: Hand	7.28	84.7%	12.05	140.1%	8.91	103.6%
Maintenance Repairers: General Utility	8.80	90.3%	8.74	89.7%	11.17	114.7%
Mechanics: Automotive	15.23	111.8%	17.07	128.3%	11.40	83.7%

— Incomplete data series or information not available.

Gulf Coast Region		Southwest Region		Northern Region		Statewide	
Entry Level	% of	Entry Level	% of	Entry Level	% of	Entry Level	Number
Average	Statewide	Average	Statewide	Average	Statewide	Average	of Firms
\$12.00	90.4%	\$16.26	122.4%	—	—	\$13.28	54
11.76	97.1%	13.40	110.7%	—	—	12.11	44
6.06	100.2%	6.53	107.9%	6.70	110.7%	6.05	90
5.31	84.6%	6.82	108.6%	6.43	102.4%	6.28	89
6.90	111.7%	6.34	102.6%	6.17	99.8%	6.18	38
8.46	95.7%	9.55	108.0%	11.55	130.7%	8.84	171
7.76	103.9%	7.22	96.7%	7.93	106.2%	7.47	111
7.81	101.0%	8.17	105.7%	9.94	128.6%	7.73	95
8.82	98.2%	9.34	104.0%	10.48	116.7%	8.98	135
6.76	91.2%	8.75	118.1%	—	—	7.41	31
8.01	105.8%	7.70	101.7%	8.75	115.6%	7.57	56
7.95	112.4%	6.67	94.3%	—	—	7.07	28
5.63	85.2%	6.82	103.2%	8.55	129.3%	6.61	59
6.05	97.9%	7.05	114.1%	7.42	120.1%	6.18	45
4.61	97.5%	5.25	111.0%	7.08	149.7%	4.73	56
14.67	102.3%	14.19	99.0%	—	—	14.34	21
9.15	106.4%	7.62	88.6%	—	—	8.60	35
9.51	97.6%	7.87	80.8%	12.54	128.7%	9.74	54
11.05	81.1%	11.10	81.5%	12.20	89.6%	13.62	38

Summary

With the recent change in Alaska's economic climate there is an even greater interest in comparative wage rates. Wage rate declines are typical during a major recession. Some regions of the state have been hit harder by slower economic times than others and this is likely to be reflected in regional wage differentials over time. The four major sources of wage rate information provide a good starting point for analysis. However, more detailed and better data is needed and often requested. Research and Analysis will continue to make every effort to improve the reliability of this important information source through larger sample sizes and better survey techniques.