

# Federal Government Occupations in Alaska

By James Wilson

The federal government is one of the largest employers in Alaska. Roughly 18,000 people (excluding military but including civilian military) are employed in a wide range of occupations. Federal employees work in every area of the state. The skill level of people employed by the federal government ranges from laborers and clerical workers to technicians and scientists.

## Applying for Federal Jobs

The United States Office of Personnel Management, located in Anchorage, is the agency responsible for processing applications of persons seeking employment with federal government agencies. With some exceptions all the processing of applications for employment and the evaluation and testing of applicants is done in that office. The Coast Guard and Forest Service offices in Juneau have been granted limited authority to test and evaluate applicants. A clerical skills test is given weekly in Juneau.

Table 1  
Federal Civilian Employment in Alaska  
Occupations with 100 or more persons  
October 1986

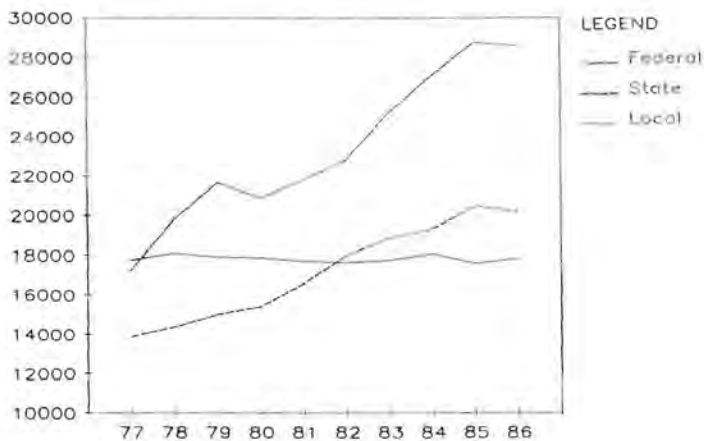
Occupational Title	Workers
Traffic, shipping, and receiving clerks	723
All other secretaries	593
All other professional, paraprofessional and technical workers	578
All other helpers, laborers, material movers,	555
Airplane dispatchers and air traffic controllers	539
Mail carriers, postal service	481
All other clerical & admin support workers	411
Biological scientists	393
Typists	388
Registered nurses	302
Clerks, postal service	283
Stock clerks - stockroom, warehouse or storage yard	278
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	254
Electrical/electronic engineering technicians and technologist	251
Civil engineers, including traffic	237
All other legal assistants and technicians, except clerical	234
Maintenance repairers, general utility	232
First line supervisors - clerical & admin support	221
All other engineering and related technicians and technologist	210
General office clerks	201
Postmasters and mail superintendents	194
Purchasing agents, exc wholesale and retail trade and farm	189
Geologists, geophysicists, and oceanographers	177
Compliance officers/enforcement inspectors, except construction	175
First line supervisors - mechanics, installers	170
Forest and conservation workers	162
Personnel, training, and labor relations specialists	151
Tax examiners, collectors and revenue agents	148
Foresters and conservation scientists	148
All other physical and life science technicians and technologists	146
Carpenters	138
Personnel clerks, except payroll and timekeeping	124
Operating engineers	122
Mobile heavy equipment mechanics, except engines	121
Systems analysts, electronic data processing	118
Biol, agric, and food technicians and technologists, exc health	116
All other motor vehicle operators	105
Plumbers, pipefitters and steamfitters	102
Accountants and auditors	100

Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Occupational Employment Statistics.

People interested in federal employment can begin by contacting the Federal Job Information Center, 701 "C" Street, Box 22, Anchorage, Alaska 99513. A recorded informa-

tional message can be called at (907) 271-5821. The Job Information Center is open for limited hours: Tuesday through Thursday from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Individual personal phone service is available by calling (907) 271-3617.

**Figure 1**  
Government Employment in Alaska  
Annual Average for 1977 to 1986



Individuals are hired for federal positions from registers of eligible applicants. To begin, a person should find out which positions have vacancies. One source of this information is the federal job opportunities list, produced regularly by the Office of Personnel Management. Applicants may apply for positions during the filing period posted for each job title.

Once the application form has been submitted it is evaluated and the individual is given a score which determines their rank on the list. Written tests are required for many positions. Persons who are certified as eligible for positions are encouraged to contact the individual agencies regarding specific positions. Each agency does its own hiring from the register of applicants.

#### Federal Government Occupations

The occupations with 100 or more persons are listed in Table 1. The proportion of professional and technical jobs and production, construction, and operating occupations in Alaska are compared to the national levels in Figure 1.

Most major departments of the executive branch of the federal government are represented in Alaska (Table 2). It is the armed forces, however, which employ the greatest number of civilian workers. Although federal workers are employed in every area of the state the great majority of them are located in Alaska's major urban centers (Table 3). Nearly one half of the federal employees are civilians working for the armed forces.

Job openings will result both from employee turnover and the needs of a slowly growing workforce. For some occupations, opportunities exist nationwide while they may be somewhat limited in Alaska. Table 4 is an extract of some job listings from the October 13 Federal Job Opportunities List.

**Table 2**  
Annual Average Federal Civilian Employment  
by Federal Agency  
Alaska 1986

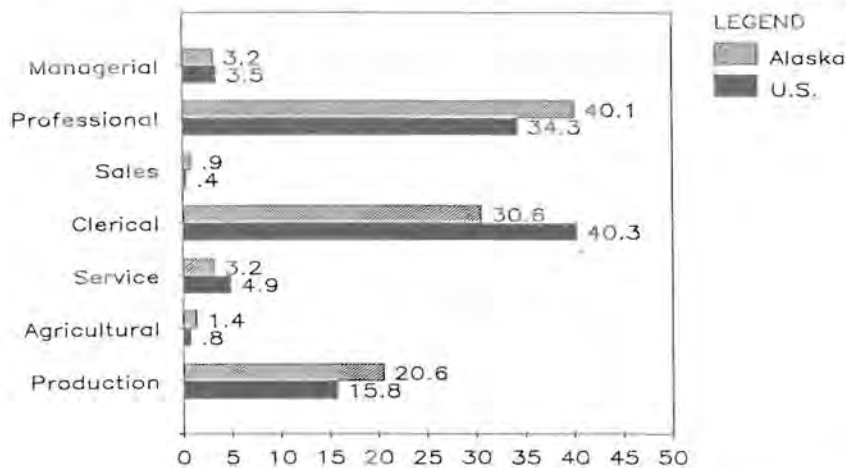
Agency	1985	1986	1986 Percent of Total
Army	3,714	3,875	22.0
Air Force	2,563	2,591	14.7
Interior	2,380	2,280	13.0
U.S. Postal Service	1,979	2,169	12.3
Transportation <sup>1</sup>	1,631	1,576	9.0
Health & Human Services	1,422	1,248	7.1
Agriculture	1,081	1,048	6.0
Army & Air Force Exchange	880	906	5.2
Navy	538	550	3.1
Commerce	437	406	2.3
Treasury	308	333	1.9
Veterans Administration	136	139	0.8
General Services Administration	118	117	0.7
Justice	86	100	0.6
United States Courts	59	63	0.4
Defense, not Armed Forces	62	53	0.3
Housing & Urban Development	47	49	0.3
Small Business Administration	30	30	0.2
Office of Personnel Management	20	21	0.1
Labor	13	14	0.1
FCC	10	13	0.1
National Labor Relations Board	5	6	0.0
General Accounting Office	5	3	0.0
Interstate Commerce Commission	1	1	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,524</b>	<b>17,592</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes Coast Guard

Source: Alaska Dept. of Labor, ES202.

Figure 2

Percent Distribution of Federal Employment by Occupational Group Alaska & U.S. October 1985



Most major departments of the executive branch of the federal government are represented in Alaska.

Table 3  
Annual Average Federal Civilian Employment in Alaska by Census Area

Area	1985	1986	Armed Forces 1986 <sup>1</sup>	Other Agency 1986
Anchorage Borough	9,860	10,013	5,080	4,933
Fairbanks Northstar Borough	2,738	2,810	1,810	1,000
Juneau Borough	1,039	1,051	0	1,051
Aleutian Islands	694	691	617	74
S.E. Fairbanks	388	388	344	44
Sitka Borough	353	309	0	309
Bethel	349	291	0	291
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	282	269	0	269
Yukon-Koyukuk	224	229	43	186
Kodiak Island Borough	242	239	0	239
Kenai Peninsula Borough	207	210	1	209
Skagway-Yakutat-Angoon	110	114	0	114
Wrangell/Petersburg	171	161	0	161
Northwest Arctic Borough	130	120	0	120
Valdez-Cordova	80	81	0	122
North Slope Borough	132	117	57	59
Prince of Wales - Outer Ketch	111	114	0	114
Mat-Su Borough	99	101	0	101
Nome	110	94	0	94
Dillingham	85	82	2	80
Bristol Bay Borough	75	71	20	51
Wade Hampton	37	28	0	28
Haines Borough	9	9	0	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,524</b>	<b>17,592</b>	<b>7,974</b>	<b>9,618</b>

<sup>1</sup> The Coast Guard as part of the Department of Transportation is included in the other agencies category. This differs from the two previous articles.

Source: Alaska Dept. of Labor, ES202 files.

Federal Wages

The starting salaries for federal workers in Alaska is presented in Table 5. In Alaska federal workers are provided an additional 25% above the standard federal salary schedule. This cost of living allowance (COLA) is intended to adjust rates of pay for the higher cost of living in Alaska. A separate hourly wage schedule has been established for trade and craft workers covered under the Department of Defense Wage Fixing Authority. The starting wage rates range from \$12.51 to \$22.24 per hour.

According to the Alaska Department of Labor's *Statistical Quarterly* the average monthly wage earned by Alaska's federal workers in 1986

**Table 4**  
**Selections from the Federal Job Opportunities Listing**  
**Anchorage Area Office, October 13, 1987**

Job Title	Grade	Location	Vacancies
Accountant/Auditor	GS-5/9	Worldwide	Many
Air Traffic Controller	GS-7	Nationwide	Many
Clerk	GS-2/3/4	Alaska	Few
Clerk-Typist	GS-2/3/4	Alaska	Few
Computer Specialist	GS-9/12	Alaska	Few
Customs Inspector	GS-5/7	Worldwide	Many
Data Transcriber	GS-2/3	Alaska	Few
Diagnostic Radiologic Tec	GS-5/7	Alaska	Some
Engineer, Professional	GS-5/13	Alaska	Some
Medical Technologist	GS-5/7/9	Alaska	Some
Nurse, Registered	GS-5	Alaska	Few
Pharmacist	GS-9/12	Nationwide	Many
Physician's Assistant	GS-7/11	Nationwide	Many
Secretary	GS-4/5/6	Alaska	Many
Telephone Operator	GS-3	Alaska	Few

(\$2,348) was virtually the same as for the private sector (\$2,345) but less than state (\$2,887) or local (\$2,617) government workers. However, one fifth of the federal "Wage" which is provided as COLA (cost of living allowance) is nontaxable income. This means, for example, that a federal worker who was paid \$30,000 a year would receive \$6,000 tax free. This could translate into a tax savings of roughly \$1,600 compared to other workers earning \$30,000.

### Summary

Federal employment has been a stable force in the Alaskan economy for many years. Federal workers are employed in a wide range of occupations in all areas of the state. The military is the largest civilian employer within the federal government in Alaska. Federal government employment has historically been stable with the number of workers growing in the last few years. Job opportunities will result from normal employee turnover and a slowly growing workforce. Although the average wage paid to federal workers in Alaska is less than for state and local government workers there is the very real benefit of receiving a portion of the wage free of tax. Job opportunities with the federal government are nationwide in many occupations. Persons seeking employment with the federal government should contact the U.S. Office of Personnel Management in Anchorage.

**Table 5**  
**Federal Annual Starting Salary Schedule for General Service**  
**including 25% COLA for Alaska**

Grade	Hourly	Yearly
GS-1	\$5.76	\$12,024
GS-2	6.48	13,520
GS-3	7.06	14,752
GS-4	7.93	16,560
GS-5	8.88	18,528
GS-6	9.89	20,651
GS-7	10.99	22,948
GS-8	12.18	25,416
GS-9	13.45	28,073
GS-10	14.80	30,915
GS-11	16.26	33,965
GS-12	19.50	40,709
GS-13	23.19	48,409
GS-14	27.40	57,204