

One of many occupations described on the Workforce Info website

Career profiles can be found at <http://almis.labor.state.ak.us> Select Career Center. A different occupation is featured each month.

Carpentry is a satisfying career where you use your skills to help build homes, libraries, hospitals, stores, and more. It offers the opportunity to work with your hands and with other skilled professionals in the building industry. Advancement to supervisory positions is possible without formal training, or you may start your own business as an independent contractor.

What do carpenters do?

Carpenters work in many different construction activities. They cut, fit, and assemble wood and other materials for small projects such as a shed or home, or they may help to build ships and industrial plants. Job duties vary by the employer's type of business. Job duties of a carpenter who works for a specialized contractor will be limited to the employer's specialty. A carpenter working for a general contractor will use a variety of skills to frame walls, put in doors and windows, build stairs, lay hardwood floors, and hang kitchen cabinets. Remodeling work requires a wide variety of skills. Individuals with good basic overall carpentry skills can find work in new construction or remodeling.

How do I become a carpenter?

There are three ways to train as a carpenter:

- Apprenticeship training programs
- Vocational schools
- On-the-job training

Formal training programs through apprenticeships or vocational training schools are recommended by employers. Apprenticeship openings are limited, so only a small proportion of carpenters learn their trade through these programs.

Apprenticeships in Alaska

Apprenticeships are four-year programs that lead to journey level carpenter. They combine on-the-job training with related instruction. In Alaska two programs are available, one union sponsored,

the other employer sponsored. Both programs place apprentices at a construction site to work under journey level carpenters. Apprentices learn elementary structural design and become familiar with common carpentry jobs, such as layout, form building, rough framing, and outside and inside finishing. They learn to use the tools, machines, equipment, and materials of the trade.

Union apprentices attend six to eight weeks of formal training at the union training centers in Anchorage or Fairbanks. The union bears the training and travel costs and provides a daily stipend. Non-union apprentices take correspondence courses throughout the four years while participating in on-the-job training. To complete the program, union apprentices must have 7,000 hours of on-the-job training and formal training combined and non-union apprentices need 8,000 hours of on-the-job training, plus 576 hours of related instruction.

Approximately 50 Alaskans are accepted annually into the union's apprenticeship program for carpenters. In 2002, 110 individuals were accepted into non-union trade apprenticeship programs, of which three were carpenter apprentices.

Apprenticeship entry requirements

Union

- At least 18 years old
- Physically able to perform the work
- High school diploma or G.E.D.
- Alaska driver's license
- Alaska resident for at least 12 months
- Pass entrance exam

Non-Union

- At least 17 years old
- High school diploma, equivalency, or G.E.D.
- Physically capable of performing the essential functions of the trade
- One year of high school algebra or one

semester of college algebra with a grade of "C" or better OR successful completion (70% or better) of a supplemental math course within the first year of apprenticeship

- Interview score of 80%

For more information about apprenticeship programs contact the following:

Union

Southern Alaska Carpenters
Anchorage Carpenter Training Center
907-344-1541 or 1-888-825-1541 (in Alaska)
Address: 8751 King St., Anchorage AK 99515

Northern Alaska Carpenters
Fairbanks Alaska Carpenter Training Center
Phone: 907-452-4626
Address: P.O. Box 71087, Fairbanks AK 99707

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of
Apprenticeship Training and Labor Services
Phone: 907-271-5035
Address: 605 W. 4th Ave. Room G-30
Anchorage AK 99501

Non-Union

ABC of Alaska
Phone: 907-565-5601
3380 C St., Ste. 100, Anchorage AK 99503
Internet Link: <http://www.abcalaska.org/>

Vocational schools

Vocational schools offer training in a variety of classes. Unlike the union apprenticeship, the trainee must pay for the classes, living expenses, and travel while attending school. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development lists two schools with programs related to carpentry. For information about the schools or their programs contact them at:

Ilisagvik College
Phone: 907-852-1820
Address: P.O. Box 749, Barrow AK 99723
Internet <http://www.ilisagvik.cc/>

Alaska Vocational Technical Center
Phone: 907-224-1459
Address: P.O. Box 889, Seward AK 99664
<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/AVTEC/home.htm>

On-the-job training

Since apprenticeship opportunities are limited, and vocational school entails costs, many take advantage of on-the-job training. Most start as a carpenter's helper assisting skilled carpenters.

As skills are learned they move to a full carpenter position. The time this takes depends upon the individual's ability to learn. An advantage of on-the-job training is that the trainee is paid while working. However, the training is dependent upon the type of work the employer is involved in and the skills of those providing the training.

Is there job advancement?

Carpenters may advance to carpentry supervisor or general construction supervisor positions. Carpenters usually have greater opportunities than most other construction workers to become general construction supervisors because they are exposed to the entire construction process. Some carpenters become independent contractors. To advance, these workers should be able to estimate the materials needed for a job, how long it will take to complete, and what it will cost.

Employment opportunities

In Alaska and nationally, employment opportunities are good for carpenters. Though the rate of growth is less than the average, turnover and openings created by those leaving the occupation create jobs. In Alaska in 2001, 17.4% of all carpenters working were non-residents. As more Alaskans train as carpenters, employers can hire more Alaska residents.

How much do carpenters earn?

Generally carpenters earn relatively high rates of pay. The average wage in Alaska for carpenters is \$22.54 per hour; the entry wage averages \$15.93, and wages for experienced carpenters average \$25.85 per hour. Carpenter helpers average \$14.66 per hour; the entry wage is \$10.70, and experienced helpers average \$16.63 per hour.

Wages on State of Alaska or federal government-funded construction projects are set by the Davis Bacon Act and range from \$15.85 to \$30.80 depending upon location and type of project.