

Spring Quarter New Hires Up by 1.3% in 1997

By Todd Mosher

In recent years, Alaska hiring has been nearly as strong during the spring quarter, which includes April through June, as it has been during the summer quarter. This is the period when employers in several industries, including seafood processing, tourism, and construction, begin to gear up for the busy summer season. In 1997, there were just under 71,000 new hires during the spring quarter, up by about 950 (or 1.3%) from the same period in 1996. These figures dwarfed the winter 1997 new hires by about 30,000.

Year-to-year hiring gains were broad-based

Most of the major regions of the state showed higher levels of hiring in the spring of 1997 compared to the previous spring. The exceptions were the Interior region, where hiring was off by about two percent, and Southeast Alaska, where hiring was about on par with the year-ago numbers. Anchorage new hires were up by a modest 1.0% compared to the spring of 1996, mostly attributable to continued growth in the services sector. Hiring in the Interior region slowed somewhat from its rapid pace of recent years. In this region, hiring in the transportation sector was about on par with the previous two springs, while retail and services hiring was down by about 2.5 percent compared to the spring of 1996.

Important notes about the new hires data

The new hires series is designed to measure job opportunities provided by both employee turnover and new job creation. Every firm with employees working in Alaska is required to report social security numbers, occupation, work site location and wages earned for each of their employees to the Alaska Department of Labor on a quarterly basis. To be considered a new hire, a person must receive wages from a firm that he or she has not worked for in any of the four previous quarters. There is no differentiation between new hires who replace a departing worker and new hires entering newly created jobs. A worker can be counted as a new hire for more than one employer during a quarter.

Tyson fire had short-term impact on turnover

Spring hiring in the seafood processing industry was up by 13.5% compared to the down year of 1996. Ironically, some of the upswing in new hires last spring was attributable to the unfortunate fire which destroyed a Tyson Seafoods processing plant on Kodiak Island in April. Other processors took up the slack when the Tyson plant went down and they took on additional workers as a result. This led to a higher than normal amount of "employer-hopping" by seafood workers in this area and increased the new hires counts. However, even discounting this event, hiring in seafood processing was somewhat stronger last spring compared to 1996.

Of Alaska's other sectors, wholesale trade; oil and gas; and finance, insurance, and real estate had the biggest year-to-year jumps in spring quarter

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Alaska New Hires—2nd Quarter 1997

New hires include job turnover and should not be used to assess job growth trends.

1/ Includes local passenger, water, and nonscheduled air transportation, as well as travel agencies and other travel arrangers. Not all of the employment in these categories is attributable to tourism, but all is heavily influenced by tourism in most regions.

2/ Includes all employees of publicly-owned institutions.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section.

	2nd Qtr '97	Change from 1st Qtr '97	Change from 2nd Qtr '96
Total New Hires:	70,888	29,890	946
By Region			
Northern	3,144	1,063	240
Interior	10,968	6,398	-245
Southwest	5,699	467	109
Anchorage	30,316	11,611	312
Gulf Coast	9,615	5,210	574
Southeast	10,162	5,344	-85
Offshore	702	-223	106
Outside	256	41	-90
Unknown	26	-21	25
By Industry			
Ag./Forestry/Fishing	1,036	561	-7
Mining	1,409	709	18
Oil & Gas Extraction	985	420	65
All Other	424	289	-47
Construction	7,215	4,606	-279
Manufacturing	7,073	1,139	604
Seafood Processing	5,476	453	653
All Other	1,597	686	-49
Trans./Comm./Util.	6,027	3,164	166
Tourism Related /1	2,165	1,575	104
All Other	3,862	1,589	62
Wholesale Trade	2,130	916	172
Retail Trade	18,886	9,777	99
Fin./Ins./Real Estate	2,365	845	277
Services	19,442	6,881	484
Hotels & Lodging	4,005	3,093	-119
All Other	15,437	3,788	603
Public Administration /2	5,305	1,292	-588

The Alaska New Hires Quarterly Report measures the number of job opportunities created by business expansions, business start-ups, and job turnover. The report assists employment security personnel and the job-seekers they serve as they develop strategies for job placement in the Alaska economy. A new hire is defined as an employee who was not working for the employer in any of the four previous quarters. New hires data include job turnover; readers, therefore, are cautioned against drawing broad conclusions about job growth trends based solely on quarterly new hires data.

hiring. (See Table 1.) On the down side, spring quarter new hires by state and local government were down significantly for the second year in a row, and non-oil mining new hires could not match the last two springs, when expansions were in full gear.