

Unemployment rate dips to 6.1 percent for July

Alaska's unemployment rate for the month of July — 6.1 percent — was the lowest ever recorded for the state since the peak of pipeline construction days of the summer of 1976, according to the Alaska Department of Labor.

The cause of the record drop, which reflected a nine-tenths of a percentage point decline from its June rate, is partly attributed to additional seasonal employment in Alaska's salmon fishery and to the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill cleanup effort.

"Usually July is a good month for Alaskan job seekers because of employment opportunities in the fishing, timber and tourist related industries," said John Boucher, a Juneau-based economist with the department.

"Typically, the lowest unemployment rates during the year are recorded in July and August. The additional labor force mobilized for the spill cleanup, coupled with normal summer activity, meant a boom for job seekers in most areas of the state during July."

With the exception of Southeast Alaska and some portions of Northern Alaska, all of the state's regions' July unemployment rates were lower than the July rates of 1988.

The fall and winter unemployment rates, however, could show some equally dramatic increases, the economist said.

"The oil spill will have much the same effect as a large-scale construction project," Boucher said. "When

workers begin getting laid off, the unemployment rate is bound to show some striking increases."

The comparable unemployment rate for the United States in July was 5.3 percent.