

Alaskan unemployment drops to 9.7%

The Alaskan unemployment rate responded to seasonal increases in employment in July and posted an unemployment rate of 9.7 percent, according to the Alaska Department of Labor.

From June to July the unemployment rate dropped nearly 1.5 percent. July marked the first time the unemployment rate fell below the double-digit mark in 1987.

The last time the unemployment rate was below 10 percent was in September 1986 when the rate was 9.2

percent. One year ago, the unemployment rate in Alaska was 10.2 percent. The comparable unemployment rate for the United States in July was 6.1 percent.

Alaska's coastal communities are leading the rest of the state toward its traditional summer unemployment low. The five lowest unemployment rates in the state were recorded in census areas heavily influenced by the fishing industry.

The state's lowest rate was in the

Aleutian Islands — 2.8 percent; followed by the Bristol Bay Borough — 3.5 percent; Kodiak Island Borough — 4.5 percent; Dillingham — 4.8 percent; and Valdez-Cordova — 6.5 percent.

At the other end of the spectrum the highest unemployment rate in Alaska was posted in the Northwest Arctic Borough where 19.5 percent of the labor force was unemployed in July.

Nonagricultural wage and salary employment figures also indicate that the fishing industry has the largest

positive impact on the Alaska economy in July. The seafood processing sector accounted for 6,700 additional wage and salary jobs in July, by far the largest increase of any industry in the state.

It should also be noted that wage and salary employment counts do not measure additional employment created by fishermen going to work on boats. In general, fishermen are considered self-employed individuals and are excluded from wage and salary employment counts.