

# Spill cleanup lowers jobless rate in Alaska

The cleanup effort following the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill continued to make its mark on Alaska's economy as the statewide unemployment rate recorded its lowest rate since the construction of the Trans-Alaska pipeline, according to the Alaska Department of Labor.

Alaska's unemployment rate dropped 0.7 of a percentage point to 7 percent in June, the lowest rate in 1989 and the lowest recorded unemployment rate during any time since the summer of 1976, according to John Boucher, a Juneau Labor Department economist.

"Clearly this is the best labor market we have seen for the Alaskan job seeker in quite some time," Boucher said.

"Even though many of the jobs created are located in the spill cleanup area, effects of the additional employment opportunities have swept across nearly every region of the state. Unemployment rates are down significantly in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai and the Mat-Su Borough."

While Alaska's unemployment rate is edging closer to the national rate, the statewide unemployment rate remains higher than the national average. The comparable unemployment rate for the United States in June was 5.5 percent.

Not surprisingly, the Valdez-Cordova area had one of the lowest unemployment rates of any area in the state. Only 4.5 percent of the labor force in the Valdez-Cordova census area was unemployed in June. Last year, the unemployment rate in the area was nearly twice that.

Alaska's nonagricultural wage and salary employment numbers showed that more than 10,000 jobs were added to Alaska's economy from May to June.