Aerospace

Skills Gap Analysis

Pilots are highly trained professionals who fly airplanes or helicopters to carry out a wide variety of tasks. Most are airline pilots, copilots, and flight engineers who transport passengers and cargo. However, 34 percent are commercial pilots involved in dusting crops, spreading seed for reforestation, testing aircraft, flying passengers and cargo to areas not served by regular airlines, directing firefighting efforts, tracking criminals, monitoring traffic, and rescuing and evacuating injured persons. The aerospace industry has been identified as a growing and “in-demand” industry area for WA State.

The following data regarding the need for these career areas has been collected from the following sources:

References:
Pierce County WDC
Workforce Explorer
Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
Job Occupational Handbook Outlook

Job Outlook

Aircraft pilots and flight engineers are expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations. Regional airlines and low-cost carriers will present the best opportunities; pilots attempting to get jobs at the major airlines will face strong competition.

Employment change. Employment of aircraft pilots and flight engineers is projected to grow 12 percent from 2008 to 2018, which is about as fast as the average for all occupations. Population growth and an expanding economy in the long run are expected to boost the demand for air travel, contributing to job growth. New jobs will be created as airlines expand their capacity to meet this rising demand by increasing the number of planes in operation and the number of flights offered.

Job prospects. Job opportunities are expected to be best for experienced pilots with the regional airlines and low-cost carriers, which are expected to grow faster than the major airlines. Opportunities with air cargo carriers also should arise because of increasing security requirements for shipping freight on passenger airlines, growth in electronic commerce, and
increased demand for global freight. Business, commuter, corporate, and on-demand air taxi travel also should provide some new jobs for pilots.

Pilots attempting to get jobs at the major airlines will face strong competition, as those firms tend to attract many more applicants than the number of job openings. Applicants also will have to compete with laid-off pilots for any available jobs. Pilots who have logged the greatest number of flying hours using sophisticated equipment typically have the best prospects. For this reason, military pilots often have an advantage over other applicants.

In addition to job openings arising from employment growth, opportunities will result from the need to replace workers transferring to other occupations or leaving the labor force. Additional openings will result from the mandatory retirement of commercial airline pilots at age 65.

Employment of pilots is sensitive to cyclical swings in the economy. During recessions, when a decline in the demand for air travel forces airlines to ground planes and curtail the number of flights, airlines may temporarily furlough some pilots.

Projections Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Title</th>
<th>Employment, 2008</th>
<th>Projected Employment, 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft pilots and flight engineers</td>
<td>116,000</td>
<td>129,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airline pilots, copilots, and flight engineers</td>
<td>76,800</td>
<td>83,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial pilots</td>
<td>39,200</td>
<td>46,500</td>
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This data shows that there is a need in WA State for skilled pilots and aerospace engineers.