

Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (Mechanical/Avionics)		South Australia
ASCO Code: 4114-11,15	July 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

Demand for aircraft maintenance engineers has recently increased due to expansion of services among a small number of existing air transport operators, along with the introduction of new service providers into South Australia. These developments, along with a longer term upward trend in aircraft movements at Adelaide airports over the previous five years, has resulted in a buoyant labour market for aircraft maintenance engineers, especially those with relevant licenses. Advice from the Civil Aviation and Safety Authority (CASA) indicates a solid increase in the number of licensed aircraft maintenance engineers in South Australia over the year to June 2007. In addition to increased industry activity, anecdotal evidence suggests that demand is affected by the older age profile of the occupation and the need to replace workers who are opting for retirement, both now and in the immediate future.

Occupational supply

The number of persons completing a contract of training in aircraft maintenance engineering has remained low for more than a decade. In the period between 1994 and 2005, completions averaged around five per annum, almost all of which were in the 'mechanical' stream. Training commencements have begun to improve, resulting in a small rise in completions in 2005 (10) and 2006 (6). DEEWR projections suggest that there will be nine completions in 2007 and 12 in 2008, again all in the 'mechanical' stream. Net migration data show that supply to the occupation from overseas was negligible in both 2004-05 and 2005-06.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A number of businesses that employ aircraft maintenance engineers were surveyed for this report, including some that had recently advertised and others that had not. The consensus of opinion was that aircraft maintenance engineers are difficult to recruit, especially those with relevant CASA licenses. Of the companies that had recently advertised, around 47 per cent of vacancies were filled within four weeks. The majority of these positions were filled via 'head-hunting' rather than through responses from job advertisements, indicating the tightness of the labour market. The response to most advertisements was poor, with an average of 0.5 suitable applicants per vacancy. A number of firms have standing vacancies for both licensed and unlicensed aircraft maintenance engineers on their company websites, some of which have been unfilled for long periods. Employers usually require aircraft maintenance engineers who are licensed to work on specific aircraft types, and it is often difficult to find the right mix of experience and maintenance qualifications. It was also noted that 'avionics' maintenance engineers are more difficult to source than 'mechanical', although recruitment difficulties are evident for both. The general view was that industry-wide investment in the recruitment and training of apprentices has not kept pace with either new or replacement demand.

Labour market outlook

Demand for aircraft maintenance engineers is likely to remain firm given recent growth in South Australian airline services and operators. Moreover, continuing developments in the state's mining sector will increase demand for regional airline services to remote areas. There are also concerns that a large number of older workers will retire from the workforce in the near future, placing further strain on the supply of experienced aircraft maintenance engineers. Given this scenario, the occupation is expected to remain in shortage over the next twelve months.