

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Program offers Alaskans state-of-the-art training for mining

By Dr. Tamika L. Ledbetter, Commissioner

One highlight of serving as commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development is supporting quality workforce training programs around the state. I get the chance to see first-hand the many opportunities Alaskans have to prepare for new careers or expand their professional skills.

Recently I traveled to the Delta Mine Training Center near Fairbanks and toured one of the country's top underground mine training facilities. Operated by the University of Alaska, this world-class training and research center features an underground mine, rock and gravel quarries, 100 acres of training area, an equipment fleet, and modern mining and construction machinery.

Under the leadership of director Bill Bieber, the center offers state-of-the-art surface and underground mine training as well as health, safety, and environmental skills development. Each year, more than 1,700 students earn the certifications they need to succeed in Alaska's high-paying hard rock mining and oil and gas sectors.



The training schedule mirrors real-life employment in an underground mine and surface operation. Students begin the program with mine safety compliance training, which is followed by an employability skills module. An important feature of the training develops and refines hand-eye coordination and muscle memory as the student completes tasks required of underground heavy equipment operators using heavy equipment simulation. The facility incorporates exemplary workforce safety standards into all aspects of the program.

The training is offered several times per year, and the schedule mirrors that of a typical mine worker:



I recently visited the Delta Mine Training Center near Fairbanks and am pictured here with Bill Bieber, the facility's director.

10-hour days over two 14-day shifts. The underground training totals 280 hours over six weeks, and the surface training is 140 hours over two weeks. Program graduates with these high-demand skills readily move into good jobs in Alaska's growing industries.

The department provides grant funding for this program and many others statewide to give Alaskans of all ages the training they need to work in Alaska's major industries. For young adults ages 18 to 24, we have also introduced career boot camps at our Alaska Vocational Technical Center in Seward (AVTEC). Whether you're interested in a maritime career or a job in health care, our Job Center staff can connect you to these opportunities and available funding.

For more information on this program, contact the Mine and Petroleum Training Services Office at (907) 262-0231 or email mapt@alaska.edu. For help getting started or exploring career and training options, call the Alaska Job Center network toll-free at (877) 723-2539.

Contact Dr. Tamika L. Ledbetter, Commissioner, at (907) 465-2700 or commissioner.labor@alaska.gov.



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