

Chemistry jobs outlook still dim, but salaries rise

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The job market for chemical scientists remains depressed for the fifth straight year — though better than for the nation as a whole — but employed chemists have enjoyed solid salary increases, according to the Nov. 7 Employment Outlook section in *Chemical & Engineering News*.

Industrial and academic market leaders told the newsmagazine that hiring levels will roughly approximate those of last year or be slightly lower. While the hiring picture is not promising, there are some bright spots, the *C&EN* survey found. Some companies are planning to increase hiring and universities and colleges are recruiting for some academic positions.

The outlook has been significantly affected by sharp rises in the price of petroleum products that have sent feedstock, material and transportation costs off the charts, mainly due to a record-breaking hurricane season that has battered refineries in the Gulf Coast region, *C&EN* notes. It's still early in the hiring season, which coincides with the academic year, and the picture could change if the industry recovers more rapidly than expected from the disasters, according to the newsmagazine.

The magazine, in preparing the special section, looked at the annual ACS Salary Survey, ACS New Graduate Survey, job placement efforts, employer demand for adding employees, and unemployment trends. *C&EN* concluded that all indicators point to continuing difficulties for chemists looking for fulltime jobs.

Quoting from the ACS New Graduate Survey, the newsmagazine reports that as of October 2004 median starting salaries for chemists who graduated during the 2003-2004 academic year were \$32,500 for bachelor's level chemists, \$43,600 for master's graduates and \$65,000 for Ph.D. chemists. These compare to starting salaries of \$32,000, \$44,500, and \$63,300 for graduates with the same degrees in October 2003. The median is the point at which half of the salaries are above a certain point and half are below that point.

Meanwhile, chemists responding to the more comprehensive ACS Salary Survey, who had not changed jobs in the previous year and who reported their salaries as of March 2004 and March 2005, posted a median gain of 5 percent, from \$80,000 to \$84,000. This followed a gain of 4.3 percent in the previous year.

Unemployment among workforce ACS members was down to 3.1 percent in March 2005 from a record high of 3.6 percent a year earlier. This compares with a U.S. national unemployment figure of 5.1 percent.

C&EN is the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society.

Source: American Chemical Society

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