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Computers aid in hi-tech search

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon uses high technology in a drive to attract high-tech companies to the state.

State officials say they have the most sophisticated system in the country for keeping track of available industrially zoned land.

"It's the only system of its kind in the country," said Norm Solomon, research analyst for Oregon's Economic Development Department.

Other states may have computerized lists of available land, he said, but Oregon's computer can score and rank the sites according to a prospective firm's requirements.

For example, Solomon showed a letter-size computer printout describing a 113-acre site near the community of Baker in Eastern Oregon.

The site was flat, had water, sewer and natural gas and a railroad, was five minutes from a freeway interchange, 10 minutes from a general aviation airport and 95 minutes from an air carrier airport, the printout stated.

The computer also provided population and educational characteristics of Baker, and the name of the property owner, among other facts.

The computer, which was displayed last

week at Northcon83, the largest electronics show in the Northwest, can provide a list of six sites within 24 hours, said Wayne Wolfe, deputy director of the department.

Since the service was started Jan. 1, 30 firms have used the system. Among the lookers are a high-tech instruments company, a publishing company, a think tank, a real-estate developer and a bottling company, Wolfe said.

He said Oregon's program cost about \$45,000 to develop, and he thought state officials would share the technology with Washington state.

"Oregon and Washington are part of the Pacific Northwest... We don't have anything to gain by not working with the state of Washington," Wolfe said.

Washington has plans to automate its land inventory system, but the plans have been put on hold because of the state's financial problems, said Richard Schrock, director of commerce and economic development.

Schrock said Washington presently has a manual system of inventorying its industrial land, and a full-time staff person to operate it.

Schrock said Washington can provide site information to prospective businesses in about the same time it takes Oregon.

Unemployment still high in construction

PORTLAND (AP) — Despite declines in Oregon's unemployment rate, construction union leaders say joblessness remains high in their industry.

"We've still got more than 50 percent of our people unemployed," said Earl Kirkland, executive secretary of the Columbia-Pacific Building Trades and Construction Council.

The council has about 25,000 members in Oregon and southwest Washington, with most of them concentrated in the Portland area.

"We're certainly not seeing any rush of new construction anywhere in the state," Kirkland said.

Last week, the state Employment Division said the seasonally adjusted jobless rate had fallen to 10.4 percent in April — the lowest rate in 19 months.

"We're also starting to see some more jobs in the construction industry," said Don Steward, the division's assistant administrator of research

and statistics. "But the problem in this field is that it's been down so long, even a 1,700-job increase like we had in April seems like a drop in the bucket."

In 1979, Steward said, the construction industry averaged 53,000 jobs. By 1982, that average had dropped to 29,600.

"It's been drifting downward ever since," Steward said. "We've had job increases now in construction for the past two months, but the April total industry figure was only 25,700 — some 2,000 jobs less than the same month a year ago."

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