

10,000 Steelworkers To Vote On New Goodyear Contract

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CLEVELAND (AP) — Thousands of workers at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. plants in seven states will vote in the coming days on a tentative national contract agreement.

The United Steelworkers of America and the company reached the deal Saturday night about three hours before a midnight deadline for the expiration of the old three-year contract, which had been extended twice. The union said rank-and-file members will be briefed on the new contract and ratification votes will be scheduled at all plants.

Wayne Ranick, a spokesman with the union headquarters in Pittsburgh, said he couldn't provide any details on whether the four-year agreement preserved union jobs or kept open the seven plants covered by the deal. Ranick, who talked to union negotiators, said Steelworker leaders were mindful of the difficult economy that was a backdrop to the contract talks.

"They feel comfortable that in a difficult circumstance they were able to work with the company and get something that they feel comfortable enough to take home to the members and talk to them about it and let them vote on it," he said.

The talks, which began in June with the national recession as a backdrop, covered about 10,300 Steelworkers at seven Goodyear plants in the U.S. The Steelworkers had made job security their top priority in talks covering workers in Akron, Ohio; Buffalo, N.Y.; Danville, Va.; Fayetteville, N.C.; Gadsden, Ala.; Topeka, Kan., and Union City, Tenn.

The goals of Akron, Ohio-based Goodyear were improved productivity and flexibility and Jim Allen, the company's chief negotiator, said they were accomplished.

"We are pleased that we have reached an agreement that accomplishes Goodyear's bargaining goals and helps secure the future for its U.S. factories," he said in a statement.

Goodyear, the biggest U.S.-based tiremaker and third largest globally, operates more than 60 plants in 25 countries and has nearly 70,000 employees.

Goodyear reported last month that it lost \$221 million in the second quarter as U.S. auto industry upheaval and the global recession cut sales 25 percent from a year ago. The loss excluding one-time items was half Wall Street's expectations, however, and Goodyear said it was seeing early indications of an economic turnaround.

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The company launched 19 new products in the second quarter, cut costs by another \$200 million and eliminated 1,700 jobs. Including 3,800 first-quarter staff cuts, the company has surpassed its full-year goal of 5,000.

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