

Pratt & Whitney To Cut 1,000 CT Jobs

Stephen Singer, AP Manufacturing Writer

EAST HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Jet engine maker Pratt & Whitney said Monday it will eliminate 1,000 jobs in Connecticut by 2011, transferring engine repair work to Georgia and Asia in a cost-cutting move.

The subsidiary of United Technologies Corp. will shut its Cheshire, Conn., plant by early 2011 and shift some operations from its East Hartford facility beginning in the second quarter of next year. Work will be moved to Columbus, Ga., Singapore and Japan.

"The only way that we can keep high-quality jobs in Connecticut is to remain competitive, react to dynamic market conditions and position the company for long-term success," the company said.

Pratt & Whitney, which is suffering from declines in airline demand, employs 35,000 workers worldwide, with 11,000 in Connecticut. A spokesman said the net loss of jobs companywide is unclear as work is moved out of the state, primarily to cut labor costs.

In deciding to terminate the jobs in Connecticut, Pratt & Whitney rejected an offer that the Machinists union valued at more than \$80 million in wage and other concessions and a state plan proposing \$100 million in economic assistance over five years.

The company said the two proposals failed to come up with \$53.8 million needed in annual and recurring savings to avoid shutting the two operations.

R.A. Warters, the company's vice president of industrial relations, told union officials in a letter that management is "extremely disappointed that our collective efforts fell short and that our work together was unable to identify a viable alternative" to eliminating the jobs.

The Machinists, which represent 3,700 Pratt & Whitney employees, accused the company of "pursuing its relentless goal of ever-more profit."

"This grab to save money at supposedly lower-cost locations could blow up in their face, but company executives chose that route over reasonable alternatives that could preserve the work here," the Machinists said.

Pratt & Whitney has vastly scaled back operations in the state since the 1960s, when more than 20,000 workers were employed.

Nearly all of Connecticut's elected officials criticized the decision.

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Sen. Chris Dodd, D-Conn., called it a "shameful act on the part of a company that owes our state and its dedicated work force more."

Independent Sen. Joe Lieberman said Pratt & Whitney's decision is "not in the best interest of our state."

And Gov. M. Jodi Rell, who ordered state economic development officials to come up with tax and other incentives to help avert the job losses, said she was "bitterly disappointed."

Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz said job losses in Connecticut will multiply to as many as 6,000 as engine component manufacturers and suppliers feel the impact of Pratt & Whitney's decision.

"This is the wrong direction for our economy to be taking," she said.

State Sen. John McKinney, leader of the minority Republicans, said state income and local property taxes are excessive and are to blame for driving employers out of Connecticut.

"We simply do not provide a friendly atmosphere for business in Connecticut," he said.

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