Northrop Grumman Cutting 642 Miss. Workers

PASCAGOULA, Miss. (AP) — Northrop Grumman Corp. plans to lay off 642 workers at its Pascagoula shipyard by the end of the year, the company said.

The first 292 affected workers were notified Wednesday under a federal law requiring 60 days notice of layoffs that affect 500 or more people.

The company told The Mississippi Press that the layoffs are due to the cyclical nature of shipbuilding, including the timing of contracts. Northrop Grumman won't say what kind of positions are affected. The shipyard currently has about 11,000 employees.

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security said the company laid off 400 workers from May to mid-July.

On July 13, Northrop Grumman said it would close its shipyard at Avondale, La., near New Orleans, in early 2013 as it consolidates military shipbuilding at Pascagoula.

Two ships in the LPD-17 series of Navy amphibious assault ships are currently under construction at Avondale, but that work is expected to be finished in early 2013, leaving the yard without a mission. The final two ships in that series will be built at Pascagoula, and no major Navy shipbuilding project to replace the LPD-17 is in the works now.

Avondale has about 4,700 workers, making it Louisiana's largest manufacturing employer. The company recently laid off 11 workers at that yard.

Northrop Grumman also plans to close its shipyard at Tallulah, La., before the end of 2010, ending 95 jobs.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/21/2015 - 4:26am*):
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