Boeing Closure Spurs Interest By Job Recruiters

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Aerospace companies seeking engineers and other workers have been reaching out to Boeing Co. following its announcement this month that it will close its plant in Wichita.

Boeing, which employs 600 engineers at the Wichita plant, plans to move some of the work to its facilities in Oklahoma City, San Antonio and Seattle over the next two years. Companies have been asking about the availability of Boeing's Wichita workers, but Boeing is still determining how many new openings it will need to fill at the other locations, Boeing spokesman Jarrod Bartlett.

"But right now we're still assessing our staffing needs for the locations where our work is going. We're trying to help employees find opportunities within the Boeing Co. first, then we'll look at other opportunities to place them with our suppliers or other aircraft companies," Bartlett said.

Meanwhile, the Wichita plant must make sure it has enough employees to meet delivery commitments on current programs, he told The Wichita Eagle for a story published Friday (http://bit.ly/w1aZXf). said.

Airbus Engineering North America and Bombardier Learjet, which both have plants in Wichita, have been touting their engineering jobs. And other aviation companies have stepped up their recruiting efforts in the area.

On Wednesday, eight aerospace-related companies will be in Wichita for an engineering job fair.

Tracy Dawson, operations manager for Expo Experts, said the job fair was prompted by the Boeing plant closing. Expo Experts is hosting the event.

"They want those qualified people to come and work for them, and they know they have that right kind of experience," she said.

The companies are looking to fill hundreds of engineering openings at Triumph Accessory Services, Ball Aerospace, Nordam, Lockheed Martin, General Atomics, L-3, Goodrich and Sierra Nevada. They are seeking engineers in electronics, manufacturing, electrical, mechanical, reliability, software, aeronautical, flight test, design, field engineers and managers.

Some have openings in Wichita, but most are looking to hire workers for other locations.

Boeing has said any layoffs could begin in the third quarter of this year. Its Wichita engineers, whose average annual salary is $84,000, may be notified of a job offer to

move to another of Boeing's facilities as early as March, said Bob Brewer, Midwest director of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace.

Not all are expected to look for another job. By early 2013, some 270 of them will be eligible to retire and another 156 will qualify for retirement within the next six years.

"Until they know what's happening, I'm not sure they will have all the information they need from Boeing or other companies to make a decision on where their career is going to take them," he said.

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