

# **Tulsa American Airlines Plant To Lay Off 450**

The Associated Press

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — About 450 mechanics and fleet service workers at American Airlines' Tulsa maintenance base will be laid off by February, the company and union officials announced Friday.

The figure is much lower than the 2,700 workers the embattled airline estimated it needed to cut in Tulsa when it filed for bankruptcy protection in November, after its parent, AMR Corp. of Fort Worth, Texas, lost \$11 billion since 2001.

American, which has operated in Tulsa for more than six decades, is also the city's largest private employer, with about 7,000 workers.

"We hate to experience even one layoff because we know that impacts one of our members and their family," said Sam Cirri, president of the Transport Workers Union Local 514. "But the company originally sought to put over 2,700 of our members on the street as well as outsource the bulk of the work we perform as part of the plan it presented to the bankruptcy court."

The union said it was able to reduce the number of layoffs in Tulsa by requiring contract provisions that called for 65 percent of aircraft maintenance to be done in-house and offering early retirement opportunities, among others.

John Hewitt, chairman of maintenance for the Local 514, said even with the lower number of layoffs, morale at the Tulsa hub continues to take a hit.

"There may be a sigh of relief from some folks, but it's just momentary because you can't forget about the people who are going to be affected," Hewitt said. "You never feel good about any layoff."

Bruce Hicks, a spokesman for American, said it was clear from the beginning that the company's restructuring would involve job loss.

"That's why we made a committed effort through 'early out' incentive programs and negotiated solutions with the unions to reduce the number of involuntary reductions," he said. "While any job loss is difficult, we are pleased that we were able to substantially reduce the number of people involuntarily separated from the company."

Union leaders have called the Tulsa hub the largest concentration of middle-class jobs in Oklahoma, with the average employee making about \$50,000 a year, similar to the city's other main industry of oil.

Mike Neal, president and CEO of the Tulsa Metro Chamber, said his agency would help displaced workers find other opportunities and training tailored to the area's

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Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

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aerospace industry.

"Tulsa is a community that will support those impacted by today's announcement," he said in a statement late Friday. "Yet, it is important to remember that thousands of jobs that are vital to our community, which were at one time threatened, will continue to be preserved."

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