Daimler Trucks Plants May Lose 1,300 Jobs

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RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Daimler Trucks North America warned Thursday that about 1,300 factory jobs could be lost in North Carolina and Oregon, reversing course a year after announcing a rebound in U.S. and overseas commerce was boosting demand for freight-hauling equipment.

Portland, Ore.-based Daimler Trucks could cut 715 jobs at a factory in Cleveland, N.C., that builds Freightliner long-distance trucks, 405 at a Mount Holly plant that builds smaller Freightliner delivery trucks, and 80 at a Gastonia parts plant, according to a notice provided to the state's Commerce Department. The layoffs could hit in April if other efforts fail to address lower demand, Daimler Trucks said.

"The action was taken due to the present softening of economic conditions that has adversely impacted the entire North American commercial vehicle industry," the company said in a statement.

The company also will decide by the end of February on layoffs at a Portland, Ore., factory that builds Western Star trucks, spokesman David Giroux said. A union official told The Oregonian (http://is.gd/l0BqJq) that Daimler Trucks has provided notice it may cut up to 250 workers at the plant.

Giroux said the Portland jobs were included in the 1,300 potential layoffs the company announced Thursday. He did not explain how the company arrived at a figure of about 1,300 given that North Carolina authorities were advised of 1,200 possible layoffs and Portland union officials of 250 more.

The company, which employs about 20,000 at plants in the United States and Mexico, does not expect the potential layoffs to hit a factory building Thomas Built school buses in High Point or another making Freightliner chassis in Gaffney, S.C., spokesman David Giroux said. Daimler Trucks is a division of Stuttgart, Germany-based Daimler AG.

Daimler Trucks said because transport trucks across North America are wearing out it is "cautiously optimistic" commercial vehicle sales will improve this year despite slower economic growth.

The company last year announced with fanfare that it expected to rehire about 1,100 laid-off workers to its Cleveland, N.C., plant to meet improving demand in the U.S. and overseas. Daimler Trucks said last summer it rehired only about half its stated goal as demand slowed.

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