

Wind Turbine Maker To Close Pa. Plant

The Associated Press



EBENSBURG, Pa. (AP) — The Spanish wind turbine manufacturer Gamesa says it will close its western Pennsylvania plant and eliminate the 62 remaining jobs.

Gamesa USA officials said Tuesday that the closure of the 8-year-old plant was prompted by a shift in the market from Pennsylvania and the Midwest to the southwestern United States. They said the company had to alter its manufacturing and supply chain strategy to keep energy costs low and maintain a strong market presence.

The Cambria Township plant about 60 miles east of Pittsburgh began layoffs at the end of 2009, when 141 workers lost their jobs. In 2012, the company laid off 92 more workers. The company said it will close the plant March 31.

Frank Fuselier, Gamesa general counsel, told The Altoona Mirror in an email that the move wasn't an indication of Gamesa's future in the commonwealth, pointing to other wind farms in central Pennsylvania as well as continued operations in eastern Pennsylvania.

Union and county officials said they were disappointed, but few were surprised by the closure given the earlier reductions.

Douglas Lengenfelder, the county's president commissioner, said the company's business model relied heavily on federal subsidies and wasn't sustainable.

"I think that (Gamesa) thought the market would be a little more in their favor," he said. "And when market realities strike, you know, business being what it is, they're not going to continue in business if they're losing money."

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Linda Thomson, president of Johnstown Area Regional Industries, agreed that the federal tax credits that attracted Gamesa have been an issue.

"I think the overall lack of a long-term solution to the production tax credits ... has made it very difficult for long-term planning and the industry is shifting a bit," she said.

Thomson said she and her staff were looking for a manufacturer to fill the building.

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