

WHIRLPOOL CLOSES DOWN PLANT, LAYS OFF WORKERS



The Whirlpool Corporation is getting ready to get rid of staff. The company made an announcement on Thursday letting the world know that it will be closing one of its manufacturing facilities by the middle of 2012. The facility that will be closing is located in the town of Fort Smith. Workers at the Fort Smith facility were told about the soon to be layoffs on the same day as the release. The company made the formal announcement for them in a meeting on Thursday afternoon. At the very least the company gave them ample warning time to try and find a new job. According to the companies statement the closing of the facility will mean letting go about 1000 employees. Of those employees only 90 of them are salaried and 884 of them were hourly. In addition to the 1000 current workers who are being let go the 800 workers who had already been on layoffs from the plant will now have to go without the hope that their jobs will be reinstated at the Fort Smith plant. After the plant is shut down the company hopes to sell off the facility. Currently they do not have a buyer ready to take on the facility. Give that the space is with 1.2 million square feet; it could be a tough sell. Currently the company is only using between 20 and 30 percent of the facilities space at any given time, and that means that the building is a large cost drain on the company. A statement released by the company said that the closure is "driven by a decrease in demand for the side-by-side refrigerator platforms that has resulted from the continued weakness in the global economy, and the aggressive pricing actions of global competitors -- some of whose trade practices are currently under investigation by the U.S. government." The company said that all Fort Smith production will shift to existing plants in the U.S. and Mexico "to leverage the resources and excess capacity at those facilities." The company also said that all of the job of creating the units would be moved to existing facilities in the US and Mexico in order, "to leverage the resources and excess capacity at those facilities." To be more specific 160 of the jobs will be moved to Iowa, 30 will make their way to Ohio and none will go to Mexico. Though, to be honest, the odds that any local workers affected by the plant closure would be able to move with the guarantee of a new job. The company said that they are "committed to helping the impacted employees and their families with the transition during the next several months." Over the next couple of months they will, "help ensure that all available training resources are made available to affected employees." They did not make any mention about whether or not that help would extend to providing their staff with a cash payment to help them get through the lean times ahead.

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