

VERSO TO LAYOFF 175



As you begin to look around and see people being laid off in all sectors, even those that are traditionally considered to be safety zones, you may feel like your best option is to hunger down with a well-established company and wait it out. After all a company with a century or more of history has managed to get through the tough times before and come out of it strong. The workers at Verso Paper Corp. may have felt that way. It is easy to feel secure when you are working for a company that has a history that dates back roughly two centuries. After all that means that they were able to survive the Great Depression. They must know what they are doing, right? While the company may know how to stay alive they are doing it the way that many companies have chosen to in the recent past, by getting rid of staffers. The Verso Paper Corp. is getting ready to get rid of 175 of its employees. The plans for this reduction in staff were initially announced by the company in October, so that the employees have had some time to plan, but now they will go into effect. In order to meet the needs of the business the company is expected to do the layoffs in stages. Still, the employees will be let go over a relatively short period of time, between tomorrow and the 27th of December, meaning that all of the staff will be off of the payroll by the New Year. Mill Manager Pat Gibney told the following about the layoffs to a reporter [from sctimes](#), "It will be a staggered reduction," Gibney said. "There's some flexibility and we have to have some people train others in certain tasks, but it pretty much has to be done by the end of the year. There will be a few (of the 175) left after the first of the year, but I'm talking about a handful — less than a dozen." On the bright side the workers who are being displaced have more options than the general public when they are laid off. All of the workers will be eligible for both their standard unemployment insurance and benefits from a Dislocated Worker Program being run by the state. More help may be available from the government if the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development request for \$350,000 to help the displaced workers is approved. Of the workers who are soon to be out of a job, 29 salaried workers and 146 hourly, the hourly workers are represented by the United Steel Workers union. That union will offer them some benefits to help mitigate the effects of being without a job. In addition the community is reaching out to these workers in an effort to help. A local religious organization, the Celebration Lutheran Church is sponsoring a job transitions seminar that the workers can attend to help them with their job search efforts. More information about that seminar can be found by calling 252-6895 or sending an email to steve.reetz@thrivent.com.

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