

LAFARGE TO LAY OFF JOPPA EMPLOYEES



On Thursday, Lafarge North America informed that is closing one of its kilns at the cement plant in Joppa. A news release made by the company officials claimed that at least one third of the employees at the Joppa plant would be facing layoffs. There would also be layoffs at Lafarge's Cave-in-Rock quarry. By and on Thursday morning, 36 employees had already received layoff notices with immediate effect. A statement from the company claimed that the poor performance of the construction industry and the continued poor performance of relevant economic sectors have forced Lafarge North America to take this step. The Cave-in-Rock Quarry and the plant at Joppa would continue to function and manufacturing of specialty well cement on Kiln 1 of the Joppa plant would not be impeded. According to the Portland Cement Association, the current economic environment has led to an average drop of 44% net cement sales since 2006. Given the situation and indications that there is no immediate way out for the sector to improve overnight, closure of cement manufacturing plants across the nation is inevitable. Lafarge purchased the Joppa Cement Plant in 1991. The plant operated two kilns and employed 105 full-time employees. Lafarge has also announced that a new 7200 ton per day kiln would be installed at the facility. Construction and purchase of equipment for the new kiln continues. However, it is expected to be put into operation only when demands for Portland cement return to normalcy. John Stull, the CEO for Lafarge US cement, concrete, and aggregate operations told the media: "The Joppa and Cave-In-Rock employees have demonstrated tremendous professionalism and commitment over the years and many have worked at the plant for decades. We recognize the impact this decision will have on their lives and their families and we will help them during this difficult transition. Lafarge looks forward to many years of continued operation in Southern Illinois, both with Kiln 1 and its specialty products, and when the new kiln comes on line."

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