

BEEF PRODUCTS INC. CLOSES THREE PLANTS, LAYS OFF 650



Expect a higher standard

The odds are good that even if you have never heard of a company called Beef Products Inc. that you may have put one of their products into your mouth at some point in your life. When the company **describes itself** you get the idea that they are a very health conscious company, "...t is reflected not only in our dedication to serving our customers and to the consumers who enjoy our lean beef, but also in our contributions to the communities we serve, from our South Dakota hometown to our industry to the global movement to improve food safety and advance public health through better nutrition." Unfortunately, that reputation has been tarnished and it is the workers of the company who are going to pay the price for these problems. The company is getting ready to close three of its processing plants in three different states not because of problems with their bottom line, but because of perceived problems with their sanitation. These three facilities are suspected of being infected with what is being called pink slime. The company will be closing their facilities in Amarillo, Texas; Waterloo, Iowa; and Garden City, Kansas. The job cuts are going to put roughly 650 workers out of a job in the very near future. The layoff of the 650 workers is going to go into effect by the 25th of this month. The facilities were put on production stop when the pink slime controversy began, but the workers were still being paid their regular salaries in the mean time. Hopefully these workers took the extra non-working time on the payroll as a warning and took this time to begin updating their resumes, putting in applications and beginning to interview while they had the time to do so. If they did not they may find themselves in a rough situation as more and more of their former co-workers also begin extended job searches in the already wounded manufacturing industry. For those of you not familiar with the idea of pink slime the term, which was first created by a microbiologist who works for the federal government, is more popularly known as lean, finely textured beef. The product is made when beef trimmings, the pieces to small or generally considered unsuitable for sale as cuts or as part of ground meats. Those scrap pieces, similar to the cuts you would find in the food served to your favorite, furry friend, are then warmed up, spun in a centrifuge and treated with an ammonium hydroxide gas that is designed to kill bacteria. This product is then added to commercial ground beef products in order to make them cheaper to produce and leaner than it would be with whole cuts only. The pink slime name comes from the appearance that the product has once it is done being processed. Lean, finely textured beef is considered to be safe by the US government, but the newly changed popular perception of the product has caused foods containing it to be pulled from public schools and store shelves, hurting the bottom line of the company that makes it.

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