

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD TO LAYOFF



I bet that you did not [know](#) that, “The Eugene Water & Electric Board is Oregon's largest customer-owned utility. Founded in 1911 and chartered by the city of Eugene as a municipal utility with a separate elected board, EWEB provides electricity, water and steam heat to its customers.” Then again why would you, if you did not live in the city of Eugene? Since we're already talking about the Eugene Water & Electric Board lets talk about the job cuts they are going to be making in the near future. The utility is getting ready to cut back on about 50 of their workers in order to make the bottom line make sense. The warning notice, sent out to workers was first grabbed by a reporter for [The Register Guard](#) and in that notice Roger Gray, the General Manager of the facility had the following to say, “The challenges we face are not temporary issues that can be remedied with short-term, budget reduction and ‘tool kit’ exercises. Since beginning my role at EWEB, I have reiterated the mantra: ‘We cannot be an island of prosperity in a sea of despair.’ Our electric rates have outpaced other utilities, especially public utilities, to the point where EWEB rates are now 50-70 percent higher than our neighbor, Springfield Utility Board. Daily letters, e-mails and phone calls from customers tell me that our community can't and won't tolerate continued double digit increases that eat further and further into people's income.” This email was sent to every worker in the company. So while it may be a fair head up it is unlikely to qualify as a proper layoff notice to workers. For now the specifics have not been confirmed, but the company will most likely fall into the category of a mass layoff action, since they are cutting back 50 workers from one location. For those of you who are not familiar with the idea of a mass layoff action here is a look at how the federal government [defines the term](#) for the purposes of tracking, “Monthly mass layoff numbers are from establishments which have at least 50 initial claims for unemployment insurance (UI) filed against them during a 5-week period. Extended mass layoff numbers (issued quarterly) are from a subset of such establishments—where private sector nonfarm employers indicate that 50 or more workers were separated from their jobs for at least 31 days.” That action means that workers will have some extra time to prepare for their job loss, though in the current economy that may not feel like much time to get ready at all. Of course it is not just this company that has had to layoff utility workers. The poor economy is impacting all of the most vital services across the nation. Some of you may recall our earlier coverage of cuts to the TVA, but for those of you who do not here is [an excerpt](#) that will get you up to speed, “In order to recoup the money lost from both the poor sales and the new project the company is looking to cut back on a significant number of employees. Accord to official reports the company will be cutting back on roughly 1,000 jobs. Though for the time being the official number is a bit sketchy and it is not clear if the job cuts will be slightly more or less than the 1,000 jobs cut.”

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