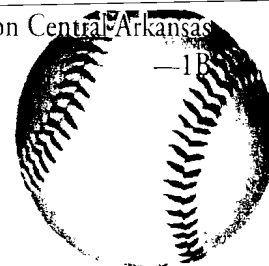


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Central Moloney institutes temporary shutdowns

By Amy Riggins
OF THE COMMERCIAL STAFF

Central Moloney Inc. has taken action in recent years to prevent a layoff like the one in

2007 when 100 workers lost jobs, according to Chris Hart, manager of human resources and industrial engineering.

"We started taking days out of our production cycle and

not running our manufacturing operation a few days out of each month," Hart told The Commercial Wednesday.

Most recently, production was halted at Central Moloney's

transformer plant March 26-27, which was the first shutdown this year, Hart said. Another shutdown is scheduled for April 6-9. Employees will get holiday pay for Good Friday.

"We plan on taking a few more days off the production cycle in April just to help with the burden of trying to run the shop with the [housing] industry right

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(Continued from Page 1A)
now still continuing to suffer," Hart said. "We try to do it in the best possible way that we can to maximize unemployment benefits for our people."

He added that production was strategically halted during Spring Break and the week of Good Friday "so if they've got to be home they can spend time with their kids."

"We're doing the best we can to take care of our folks — and we've got good folks," Hart said. "Within the transformer industry our product is known as the most superior product in the industry and we want to keep the workforce that's producing that superior product."

The average seniority at the plant is 24 years, he said.

Central Moloney manufactures electrical transformers and transformer components.

Asked if future layoffs were in the cards, Hart said, "If we had to do something in the relatively near future, it would be a minimal impact to the overall head count."

He added that it "wouldn't be the size of the layoff in 2007."

In addition to temporary shutdowns, employees' "willingness to work in jobs that they typically don't do" has helped avoid a layoff, Hart said. He described the company's efforts as "creative" in avoiding one.

Hart said he doesn't expect the components plant to be impacted because it "has managed to maintain a full backlog."

"Comparatively speak-

ing, we're doing a lot better than many of our competitors," he said. "I'm just glad it's not any worse than it is."

New contract reached with union

Central Moloney met with about two-thirds of its 600 employees Tuesday at the Pine Bluff Convention Center, where the two sides ratified a new, three-year agreement.

Those employees belong to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 1658.

"We're quite satisfied," Willie Roby, president and business manager of the local union, said in an interview Wednesday. "I think we reached an agreement that was mutually satisfactory for both parties. We worked together quite well."

Hart agreed.

"We were pleasantly surprised to see how many people supported the new agreement," Hart said.

He said Central Moloney rented the center after negotiations had been completed in order to present the new contract and allow employees to vote on it.

Sixty-six percent of union employees who work in the transformer plant voted for the agreement, while 95 percent of the components plant's union members supported it.

Included in the agreement, Hart said, were wage increases, increases in the employee contribution for health care coverage and increased pension benefits.

"I'm tickled to death that we got the contract rati-

fied," Hart said. "I think it's an absolute positive that, not only were we able to negotiate a fair contract, but the people who had the responsibility of voting on it recognized and approved it."

Roby said, although they "had our differences," it is in the union's best interest to work with the company — not against it.

"We always try to use a win-win approach because we know that there is nothing good for us that's not good for the company," he said. "As we try to get things we want, we try to satisfy the company's needs at the same time because we've got to keep the company open."

"So we're not going to do anything to hurt them because it's our future."