

Arizona copper mine laying off hundreds of workers



LAKE HAVASU CITY, Ariz. — A copper mine in northwestern Arizona is shutting down production and laying off hundreds of workers in the wake of a Bankruptcy Court filing by its corporate owner.

Mineral Park, an open pit mine located 15 miles northwest of Kingman, sent layoff notices to more than 350 workers on Monday, the Today's News-Herald reported.

Susie Parel-Duranceau, Mohave County community services director, said the county will hold "rapid response orientations" to help the workers look for other jobs and identify unemployment and other benefits.

"In the last 16 years, this is probably one of the biggest layoffs that we will be reacting to for one company," she said.

Human Resources Manager Steve Lawson said the layoffs will be phased in over eight weeks as operations are curtailed.

"We are focusing our efforts to find a new place and support these folks in time of distress," Lawson said. "I want to take care of these folks. These are good people."

The mine's owner, Vancouver, British Columbia-based Mercator Mineral Park Holdings Ltd., on Aug. 25 filed in Delaware for protection under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code and has been attempting to sell the mine. However, a possible sale fell through, according to a letter sent to workers.

"While the company would have preferred to provide more notice of the mine and mill closing, unforeseeable business circumstances have prevented it from doing so," Lawson said in the letter. "Unfortunately, management has just learned that the sale process will not result in any offer to acquire the company."

The mine is to be placed in "maintenance and care" mode so it can be put back into production if the company's financial situation improves.

Nicole Moon, a spokeswoman with the Arizona Department of Economic Security, said the mine company informed the state Monday that the layoffs would affect 383 employees.

Mohave County Supervisor Buster Johnson said large companies often tell the county a month or two before major layoffs, allowing the county to educate workers about resources before they lose their jobs.

"It would have been nice if we would have been given some advanced notice, so we could be preparing for it," Johnson said.

Mineral Park started production in 1963 under the Duval Corp. The mine was acquired by Cyprus Mining Co. in 1986 and by Equatorial Mining of Australia in 1997. Mercator Mineral Park Holdings purchased the mine in 2003.

Source: <http://www.azcentral.com/story/money/business/2014/12/30/mohave-county-mine-laying-off-hundreds-workers/21052285/>