

Loss of Tyco Signals Changing Times  
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DALLAS -- The announced closing of the local Tyco plant hit its employees hard, and rocked city officials.

Dallas as a city has tried to build up the town around a few major industries. This has long been a part of the overall comprehensive plan, said City Manager Roger Jordan. The goal is to attract businesses that will provide jobs near where people live.

The loss of the Tyco plant shows that goal has become less practical in the modern economy. With outsourcing and metro bedroom communities, people live farther and farther from where they work.

"It is still the city's goal to bring primary industry here -- but it has become harder to compete because we are so far from I-5," Jordan said.

When TTM Technologies announced last week that it is closing its Dallas printed circuit board plant, which it had bought from Tyco International just two months ago, it meant the loss of jobs for about 320 people. They will have to decide between trying to retrain for another kind of work, or relocating to find similar work.

The plant will continue to take orders for the next two weeks, and the layoffs will take place as work orders are completed.

Most likely, the majority of former TTM employees will not find work in Dallas.

"It's a tragedy that something like this would happen to a community," Jordan said.

"But it is indicative of today's world ... I imagine that down the line Dallas is going to become more of a community like Hillsboro or Beaverton, with a few core industries of its own, but with a large portion of its citizens commuting into the greater Salem metro area."

The Mid-Willamette Valley is becoming more of a regional economy. On the one hand this eases the blow when a large industry pulls out of a community, but on the other hand it contributes to commute time, loss of community atmosphere, urban sprawl, air pollution and traffic jams.

In the case of TTM, 40 to 50 per cent of the full-time employees live in Polk County. Most of the the rest come from Yamhill and Marion counties.

Jordan said he doesn't think it will be long before another business moves into the TTM building because it is located in the central valley and will be move-in ready when it goes on the market.

"TTM is looking to sell the building fast. We have had a number of industries contact us in the past, looking for a property just like this one," Jordan said.

Worksource Oregon will hold "Rapid Recovery Meetings" for TTM employees on Dec. 18 at the plant at 10 a.m., 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. It will explain services through the career center system in Polk, Yamhill and Marion counties and through Chemeketa Community College.

Tyco employees will have health care benefits only through their last day of work. Under federal law, COBRA coverage is then available, but that will cost from \$1,100 to \$1,300 a month depending on family size.

Dallas School Superintendent Christy Perry said the district is ready to step in and make sure the children of local Tyco families will not go without lunches or needed school supplies. Parents need only to contact school principals.

"The school district is prepared to help," she said.

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