

Sealed Air to close C.R. plant in ? '09

The only good news Tuesday for about 260 Sealed Air Cryovac employees is that they might have jobs for another 10 months.

[Sealed Air Corp.](#) told employees and union representatives Tuesday that the company will be closing the food packaging plant at 1125 Wilson Ave. SW in six to 10 months.

The plant has operated for 57 years. Employees were cautioned this month that a closing was under consideration.

In a statement, the corporation said it is working to develop manufacturing centers of excellence to improve productivity and efficiency. The bulk of the work performed in Cedar Rapids will be relocated to packaging plants in Arkansas, South Carolina and Mexico.

"This was an extremely difficult decision for Sealed Air to make, understanding the impact to our employees and the Cedar Rapids community," Director of [Communications](#) Ken Aurichio said in the statement. He said Sealed Air Corp. considered operating costs, strategic location, proximity to other facilities and levels of technology in its decision.

Economic development officials in Cedar Rapids had held [telephone](#) discussions with local plant management and corporate officials but were rejected in their attempts to gain a meeting aimed at persuading the company to stay.

"I think it was strictly a short-term, cost-cutting decision," said Mark Seckman, president of Priority One.

Seckman said he was not surprised by the closing. He interpreted Sealed Air's refusal to meet with Priority One as an indication that the decision had been made already.

Seckman said the local facility might have had disadvantages in age and size, "but one thing we know they will not get is the kind of work force they had in Cedar Rapids." In previous meetings, Seckman said, the company has praised its Cedar Rapids work force as one of its best.

Sealed Air Corp., based in Elmwood Park, N.J., announced plans six months ago to [invest](#) about \$11 million in a new plant in Louisville, Ky. That plant will not produce the kind of products made in Cedar Rapids, instead concentrating on a line of products acquired by the company the last year, Aurichio said.

Iowa Workforce Development officials had not yet received any official confirmation of the closing decision.

Representatives of Teamsters Local 238, which represented the plant workers, were not available for comment.

Aurichio said Sealed Air plans to meet with the union to discuss severance terms.

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