

Plastics factory to close

By John Henderson
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A plastic manufacturing plant in Battleboro that employs 241 full-time workers will be closing its doors at the end of November.

Berry Plastics is closing its tapes, bags and coatings manufacturing plant at 5746 Pearsall St. that has been open for 24 years. It operates out of a 390,000-square-foot building that the company will be putting up for sale.

The primary reason for the plant closure is the company was having a hard time making a profit on the primary product that plant produces, which is sheeting for drop cloths.

"It is a combination of our access to what we call 'reprocessed resin,' and that we don't have access to a good stream to make that product," said Jeff Bennett, vice president of human resources for the company. "We cannot make it at a price that is profitable."

Bennett said employees are being urged to apply for other positions in the company.

"Over the next several months, we will work diligently with our employees to secure other positions within Berry Plastics," a company press release states. "All employees have the opportunity to express their interest in remaining with Berry Plastics, and we will attempt to match their interest with available openings in other Berry facilities."

The closest Berry plant to Battleboro is in Ahoskie, which produces plastic bottle caps.

Bennett said he could not say whether employees would be given severance pay. But he said they will be eligible for unemployment compensation, and the company is bringing in state officials to the plant to help those who are interested in signing up for jobless benefits.

"We have made contact with Rocky Mount local elected officials and the state of North Carolina, and they are bringing in a rapid response team to assist with job retraining," Bennett said. "Our goal is to help people as much as we can either to secure another position in Berry or transition out of Berry."

The company praised the employees in a press release.

"As with any action that results in the loss of employment to our Berry employees, the closing of this location comes with great disappointment due to the talented and dedicated workforce at this location," it stated. "However, this action is required as part of our efforts to restructure our operations to meet customer demands and the markets that we serve."

According to the company's website, Berry Plastics Corp. was established in 1967 as Imperial Plastics and located in Evansville, Ind. Berry Plastics has grown into a manufacturer of injection-molded plastic packaging, thermoformed products, flexible films and tapes and coatings. The company has more than 60 manufacturing facilities worldwide and manufactures more than seven million cups a day.

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