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BUSINESS

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# Monsanto Cutting 45% Of Queeny Plant Staff

By Robert Steyer
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Monsanto Co. Thursday told employees at the John F. Queeny Plant in St. Louis that it would eliminate 45 percent of the plant's work force when production of four chemicals is transferred.

The notice was not a surprise. Union workers signed a three-year contract in late August, recognizing that jobs would be lost as part of the consolidation. The plant is at 1700 South Second Street.

Monsanto said that 108 of 243 hourly employees, represented by Local 16 of the International Chemical Workers Union, would be dismissed early next year.

Each worker will get 52 weeks' severance pay, plus academic or vocational training and job placement help, a corporate spokesman said.

**Monsanto has reduced production at the plant over the years, as the company stopped making some chemicals and merged manufacturing of other products at other plants.**

Monsanto originally said that as many as 140 hourly workers could lose their jobs.

Union employees earn between $13.03 and $15.27 an hour. Their new contract calls for a $1.86-an-hour increase spread over three years.

"We will be asking for 'impact bargaining' over the shutdown," said Jim Zeuner, vice president of Local 16. "We want to negotiate the conditions and benefits for long-time employees who will be losing their jobs."

Zeuner said the union isn't challenging Monsanto's decision to stop production of the chemicals.

Sixty of 131 salaried employees also will lose their jobs within 18 to 24 months, Monsanto said.

Salaried workers will get the same severance pay and retraining benefits as hourly workers. The spokesman said he did not know if any of these workers would be offered jobs within.

Thus, total plant employment could drop to 206 from 374. Ten years ago, the Queeny Plant had 1,274 hourly and salaried employees.

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Within 60 days, Monsanto will end Queeny's production of alachlor, a corn and soybean herbicide sold under the Lasso brand name. The plant will stop producing chloroacetyl chloride, which is used to make alachlor. These chemicals will be made at a plant in Muscatine, Iowa, that now manufactures 75 percent of alachlor.

Production of acetochlor — a corn herbicide sold in four countries but still under U.S. government review — also will be transferred to Iowa.

At the end of January, the Queeny Plant will stop making trichlorocarbanalide, a bacteria-battling agent used in deodorant soaps. TCC production will be consolidated at a Monsanto plant in Wales.

Ten years ago, the Queeny Plant made 24 chemicals. By early next year, it will be making only four — including L-aspartic acid, the key ingredient in aspartame, the artificial sweetener sold under brand names NutraSweet and Equal.

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III.

Many of the allegations in the suit also deal with issues that did not even exist at the time the plant was designed and constructed.

All that notwithstanding, the consent order represents a major stride towards resolving the dispute. I am optimistic that the entire suit can be resolved satisfactorily if we can continue to work in a cooperative manner.

It is our hope that the carbon additions will further improve the quality of effluent from American Bottoms.

Our original design and construction would have enabled us to use an advanced technology which permitted recycling of carbon. A major component of this mechanism was destroyed by an explosion in 1987...not even five weeks after it began operating.

IV.

We suspended use of carbon since then because of the cost of repairs...concerns about employe safety...and the effectiveness of that particular technology.

We do not anticipate the same problems in this latest effort to use carbon. It's a different process.

Incidentally, the carbon may lessen the yellow color of the discharges. I must say, though, that there is no evidence that the color is harmful. But it does look bad.

We have done...and will continue to do... everything practical and feasible within the physical limits of our plant to insure cost-effective, high-quality wastewater standards.

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