

Oscar Mayer to Close Madison Plant, 1,000 Jobs Lost

Written by GBP Staff

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/oscar-mayer-plant-mdsn-s5.jpg>



MADISON - Madison's Oscar Mayer plant, a fixture on the East Side for nearly 100 years, will close and its headquarters will move to Chicago, putting 1,000 employees out of work, parent company Kraft Heinz announced Wednesday.

The loss of one of Madison's signature companies and long time largest private employer is part of a plan by parent company Kraft Heinz to close seven factories in the U.S. and Canada, four months after the two food giants merged.

The closings will eliminate 2,600 positions nationally and consolidate Oscar Mayer's headquarters and Kraft Heinz's U.S. Meats division in Chicago in 2016, shifting 250 jobs to the Chicago area, the company said.

"We had no indication," said Doug Leikness, the head of the union representing Oscar Mayer factory workers in Madison. He said union and management officials met Monday and there was no sign a closing was imminent. "They duped us," Leikness, sounding stunned, said of Kraft officials.

Leikness, president of United Food & Commercial Workers Local 538, said he was told just after 1 p.m. that production at the factory, 910 Mayer Ave., will end by early 2017.

According to a report in the Wisconsin State Journal, a meeting with employees was held at 1:30 p.m., and Kraft Heinz released its statement to the media at the same time.

At its peak, in the mid-1970s, Oscar Mayer was Madison's No. 1 private employer, with more than 4,000 workers at its offices and plant at Packers and Commercial avenues. At that time, much of the working class culture of east side Madison revolved around the plant and the nearby American Family Insurance headquarters.

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OSCAR MAYER CO. IS PLANNING TO CLOSE ITS MADISON PLANT, WHICH EMPLOYS 1,000 PEOPLE, BY THE END OF THE YEAR. THE COMPANY IS ALSO PLANNING TO CLOSE ITS CHICAGO PLANT, WHICH EMPLOYS 1,000 PEOPLE, BY THE END OF THE YEAR.