

Over 900 jobs to be lost as Verso plans to shutter paper mill in Wisconsin Rapids.

WISCONSIN -- After crushing Wisconsin's manufacturing sector with multiple trade wars, Trump's failed Coronavirus response is adding to the damage. It was recently announced that Verso, which produces paper, will be shutting down its Wisconsin Rapids factory as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Read the full story here or parts of it below.

Wisconsin State Journal: Over 900 jobs to be lost as Verso plans to shutter paper mill in Wisconsin Rapids



The state's paper industry has suffered another debilitating blow, this time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Verso Papers announced Tuesday it would shutter its mill in Wisconsin Rapids by the end of

July, putting more than 900 people out of work. The Ohio-based company also said it would close its mill in Duluth, Minnesota, by the end of June, a move that would eliminate about 235 jobs.

In a statement, the company said it is "exploring viable and sustainable alternatives" for both mills, including restarting the facilities if market conditions improve or closing them permanently and putting them up for sale.

[...]

The decision to close the two mills is driven by "the accelerated decline in graphic paper demand resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic," the company said. Stay-at-home orders have "significantly" reduced the use of print advertising including in retail, sports, entertainment and tourism. According to industry estimates, North American printing and writing demand fell by 38% year-over-year in April, and operating rates are expected to drop well below 70% in the second quarter. Verso also operates mills in Michigan's Upper Peninsula in Quinessec, just north of Niagra, Wisconsin, and in Escanaba.

The mill in Wisconsin Rapids is the city's largest employer and has been a staple along the Wisconsin River since 1904. The loss of jobs will be felt throughout central Wisconsin, Mayor Shane Blaser told the Wisconsin Rapids Tribune.

"During a time when so many have so little, with COVID-19 impacting our health and wealth, this news is even more devastating," Blaser said. "My heart goes out to each and every one of these employees and their families."

[...]

The state is now home to 35 pulp, paper and paperboard mills that produce $13.7 billion in product annually, according to the WPC.

Wisconsin Economic Development Secretary Missy Hughes said state officials "understand the importance of the paper industry," which has an estimated $18 billion economic impact in Wisconsin.

[...]

In 2017, Appleton Coated in Combined Locks filed for receivership, closed, was sold and restarted some manufacturing but only about 150 of the company's 620 employees were called back that year. In 2018, Kimberly-Clark, founded in 1870 in Neenah but now based in Dallas, Texas, cut about 5,500 jobs worldwide, about 13 percent of its workforce. Less than two weeks later, it announced plans to eliminate about 600 jobs in the Fox River Valley.

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