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## Bassett Furniture Closing Mount Airy Plant

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**BASSETT, Va.** -- Bassett Furniture Industries said Thursday it will cease operations at a wood manufacturing plant in Mount Airy, a move that affects about 300 local workers.

The closure of the 540,000-square-foot facility, located on Sheep Farm Road, will occur over the next 60 days. The move will affect about 15 percent of the company's workforce.

Bassett officials said they will move production of some products from the Mount Airy facility to a wood facility in Bassett, Va. They cited a shift in demand to imported wood products as a key reason for the decision.

The move will save the company about \$4 or \$5 million annually, according to a statement from Bassett.

"We recognize that our employees at this facility have worked hard to meet the company's goals, and this decision is in no way a reflection on them," said Robert H. Spilman Jr., Bassett's president and chief executive officer.

"Our employees in Mount Airy have been extremely dedicated and loyal employees for many years, and we will provide them with assistance to make the transition as smooth as possible under the circumstances."

The news dealt a blow to a county rocked by previous job losses during the last year.

"First job that he ever had," Melissa McMillan said of her husband. "He found out (Thursday) he was going to lose it, and I have a baby on the way. We don't know what we are going to do."

In November, sock-maker Renfro downsized its Mount Airy plant, laying off 280 people. A month later, 60 jobs were cut at Chatham-Borgstena, which makes seat covers.

In Pilot Mountain, 125 jobs were lost at rope-maker Wellington. Those jobs were sent to Mexico. And in May, 45 jobs were lost at Elkin's Ferguson Enterprises.

Elsewhere in the Triad, Thomasville Furniture announced 600 job cuts in June. In Danville, about 200 workers were affected by Dan River's decision to close an accessory plant.

The Bassett closing will leave the company with about 1,700 employees at two wood furniture plants, an upholstery plant, a supply plant and a contemporary upholstery facility in Virginia and North Carolina.

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 **WXII 12's Damany Lewis**

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