

SCHENECTADY

Furloughs for 850 GE workers to begin on Monday

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A planned furlough of an estimated 850 unionized workers at General Electric's campus in Schenectady and Rotterdam will begin Monday, a company official said. GE employs approximately 4,000 people across the campus.

The furlough will last nine weeks, part of a contract amendment that IUE-CWA Local 301 approved with GE a year ago. As part of the agreement, workers will receive 75 percent of their pay during the shutdown.

The shutdown affects manufacturing operations for steam turbines and generators only.

Officials say the contract avoided the potential loss of permanent hourly jobs through June 2011 and allowed for construction of the \$100 million battery plant to be built on the GE campus.

"In the big picture, this avoids permanent layoffs as we face the impacts of the global recession," said GE spokeswoman Chris Horne.

GE will keep 170 maintenance and trade workers active during the furlough on special projects, Horne said. Salaried workers at the facility also will work during the shutdown, completing required training, but will be asked to take mandatory vacation time, she said.

The contract amendment was to a four-year national agreement ratified in 2007. It guarantees no permanent hourly workforce reductions through June 19, 2011; places a moratorium on plant closings, transfers or both on production work through June

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Furlough

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19, 2011; and offers a voluntary retirement incentive for Local 301 employees age 60 and older during 2010, based on years of service.

In return, Local 301 workers gave up a 3 percent raise offered under the national contract and a cost-of-living increase in January. The company also won the right to shut down operations on the GE campus for nine weeks this summer [the

plant closes for two weeks during the late summer] and for one week during Thanksgiving week this year. The company will also be able to hire new workers at GE Energy and at Global Research for \$10 less per hour. The final vote was 785 for and 363 against with two votes void.

Union acceptance of the amendment was key to siting the battery plant in Schenectady, local officials said. GE will hire 350 workers for the plant. These workers will be subject to different wages and benefits from those who belong to Local 301, providing cost savings to the company.