

Yardney makes it official



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By **LEE HOWARD** Day Staff Writer

Stonington - Yardney Technical Products Inc. has officially notified the state that its longtime battery manufacturing plant on Mechanic Street in Pawcatuck will close next month as the company moves to a renovated, more efficient facility in Rhode Island.

Yardney, a division of Ener-Tek International Inc., said 144 jobs in Connecticut would be affected, though all of the positions are expected to be reconstituted at the company's new 140,000-square-foot headquarters in East Greenwich, R.I., at 2000 South County Trail. The company first announced plans to move out of state in 2011, though news of Rhode Island's overtures to Yardney had leaked out a year earlier.

Yardney's current 260,000-square-foot plant in Pawcatuck will be closed over a two-week period from Nov. 16-29, according to a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification filed this week with the state Department of Labor. The notification indicated only 24 affected jobs were union positions, while 120 were non-union.

No one from Yardney was available Friday for comment. A message left for Stonington's first selectman, Ed Habarek, went unreturned.

Officials involved in local business development efforts have been critical of the state in the past for not moving quickly enough to save Yardney's high-tech jobs from moving out of state under the previous administration.

"The state has to get involved early on," said one official, who asked not to be identified because she is not authorized to speak to the press. "You have to woo these guys."

Yardney, whose lithium-ion batteries have gone to Mars aboard NASA spaceships, received incentives from Rhode Island that included a \$6 million tax-exempt bond, as well as a sales tax exemption totaling more than \$500,000 for the purchase of construction materials, machinery, computers and other equipment.

The company in turn promised the creation of at least 165 jobs in state within the first three years, and more than half the jobs will pay above the state's annual median wage. Rhode Island projects that state income taxes collected from the new Yardney jobs will more than offset the sales tax exemption over the first three years.

Formerly Yardney Electric Corp., the company started out in New York City in 1944, noted for its rechargeable silver-zinc and silver chloride batteries. It moved to Pawcatuck in 1970, shortly after being acquired by Whittaker Corp., and went on to develop products for mini-subs, rockets, torpedoes, aircraft and satellites, among other applications of its technology.

Whittaker Technical Products owns the Yardney building and will continue to pay Stonington levies on the property, but the town will lose several thousand dollars in taxes on the site's equipment annually when the company leaves, according to previous reports.

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