

KENT, Ohio -- Moon Plastics Inc., the fifth-largest employer in Portage County, announced it will lay off 100 of its 400 workers, effective at the end of the workday Friday.

Inexpensive plastic products from China have flooded the U.S. market and lowered demand for the company's products, Moon Plastics said in a press release Monday. Laid-off workers may be called back if business picks up, the company added.

“We hate doing this,” Tom Hardy, president of Moon Plastics, said in the press release. “We'd prefer to be selling more products and adding workers, but this is today's global economy.”

Moon Plastics has seen a sharp decline in the last six months, Tom Hardy, president of Moon Plastics, said in a phone interview. Chinese companies have low export costs, subsidized by their government, and basically zero environmental investment because China has little or no environmental regulation, meaning their overhead is much lower than the U.S., Hardy added.

“This is why America has lost millions of manufacturing jobs to China since 2001,” Hardy said. “It is tough for U.S. companies to compete when you have higher fixed costs than your competitors.”

The U.S. government has to do more about these imports from China, like imposing tariffs or sanctions or capping imports. What the Chinese are really doing is building their own economy by trying to destroy our economy, Joe Paulson, president of the United Plastic Workers of America Local 13, which represents 350 of Moon Plastics' 400 employees, said.

"We'll be helping our members apply for unemployment benefits, but the men and women in our union don't want the dole--they'd rather be back at their jobs," Paulson said.

The mayor of Kent, Jerry T. Fiala, had a few remarks about the layoffs at Moon Plastics.

"It's a tough break for the company, which has been a good corporate citizen for many years," Mayor Fiala said. "It's a tough break for the workers, of course, and it's a tough break for the area economy--those workers are our taxpayers."