

# Freightliner Machinists prepare for layoff, bargaining

By DON McINTOSH  
Associate Editor

Machinists Local 1005 moved into speed-up mode in March, as the union simultaneously prepares to help 632 members due to be laid off at Freightliner at the end of the month and gears up to bargain a contract for the 655 who remain.

Local 1005 — the largest of four unions at Freightliner — is also considering a political protest against politicians who voted for job-destroying trade agreements. And it expects to add a new group of Freightliner workers, even though they will most likely be laid off not long after joining the union.

Daimler-Chrysler announced in January that it will permanently cease production of Freightliner brand trucks at its Swan Island facility in

Portland by March 30, though the company's Western Star brand trucks will continue to be produced at the plant. Freightliner trucks will be made at plants in North Carolina and Mexico.

Unions, management and government and non-profit agencies teamed up to organize a massive job fair for the laid-off workers. The event will take place at Portland Memorial Coliseum from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesday, March 28. It will be open to workers and their families. As many as 100 employers, mostly in manufacturing, are expected to take part. Event organizers focused recruitment efforts on companies that are currently hiring, and that pay comparable wages and benefits.

Local building trades unions are also extending a coordinated welcome, not just to the downsized Freightliner workers but to other workers being laid off this spring, including workers at Georgia-Pacific's Camas, Washington paper mill, Tigard truck throttle maker Williams Controls, and the U.S. Air Force 939th Air Refueling Wing, which is slated to close in June. Apprenticeship program coordinators from as many as 21 separate skilled construction trades will be available to discuss career opportunities at an open house Friday, April 6, from 10 a.m. to noon at the NECA-IBEW Electrical Training Center, 16021 NE Airport Way, Portland.

For members who remain, the current three-year Machinists Union contract is due to expire July 1. The union is planning a hot dog feed March 22 outside the plant to show appreciation for the members being laid off and to encourage members to get involved in the union's political and contract

campaigns. Then on March 24, hundreds of workers are expected to attend the union's contract formulation meeting, at which they will decide negotiating priorities, elect a bargaining committee and take a preliminary strike vote. The vote is intended to underscore members' willingness to strike if the bargaining team can't get a satisfactory contract.

The last Freightliner truck is scheduled to roll off the assembly line on March 29 and the last day of work for the employees being laid off is March 30.

The layoff will cut in half the Machinists workforce at the plant — and that's after previous waves of layoffs over the last seven years had already halved the local's membership, which stood at 2,600 in 1999.

"They were making money here," said Machinists Business Agent Joe Kear. "But they want to make even more money in Mexico." At Local 1005's March 17 general membership meeting, members will consider endorsing a protest against trade agreements that have greased the skids for

jobs to go abroad. "We are a good example of what happens when trade agreements are negotiated without any consideration for maintaining job base in our local communities," Kear said.

The Cross Border Labor Organizing Council will assist in the protest, which will take place outside the Edith Green Wendell Wyatt Federal Building in downtown Portland at noon, Wednesday April 4. U.S. Senator Ron Wyden's offices are located in the building. Critics of so-called free trade agreements want to hold Wyden to account for past votes, like the 1993 vote he cast for NAFTA as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Investor protections and other guarantees contained in NAFTA have made it easier for manufacturers to shift production from the United States to Mexico. Wyden has voted for nearly every NAFTA-style trade agreement since, and labor unions want him to face the consequences of those votes, and join other members of Congress in opposing "fast track" negotiating authority, which is up for

renewal in June. The protest will also call out Congressman Earl Blumenthauer, who in defending his 2003 vote for a trade agreement with Chile, said Freightliner officials told him the agreement would make it easier for them to sell trucks in Chile.

Fourteen of 16 workers at Freightliner's previously nonunion pre-delivery inspection facility recently signed a petition seeking to join the Machinists. The facility details and customizes new Freightliner trucks for customers, so the department could be working as long as a month after the last truck is assembled in Portland.

Freightliner management declined an offer by Portland City Commissioner Eric Sten to verify the petition. Instead, the employees must wait for the results of a government-supervised election. At the request of the Machinists, Sten wrote a letter to Freightliner asking them to remain neutral toward the union campaign in the department. Kear said it appears managers are remaining neutral. The union election is scheduled April 3.

## CORRECTIONS

An article on the Freightliner layoffs in the March 2 issue of the Northwest Labor Press contained several errors, and left out some information. Freightliner workers top out at \$21.55 an hour under the Machinist contract, not \$20.55 as reported. The U.S. Government certified that Freightliner layoffs were trade-related, not because of the company's decision to build a new plant in Saltillo, Mexico, as the article implied, but because the union had documented work moving to the Freightliner plant in Santiago Tlanguistenco, Mexico, in 2005. Also, the article failed to report that the 2007 truck engines will achieve much of their reduction in particulate emissions through recirculation of exhaust gases through the engine. The NW Labor Press regrets the errors and omission.

**Candlelight Vigil for Fairness**

**Wednesday, March 21st  
6:00 p.m.**

**Providence Portland Medical Center  
47th and NE Glisan Portland, Oregon**

Dedicated health care workers at Providence Health & Services' hospitals in our community are being denied access to a free and fair election process. The Workers' Rights Board Fair Election Oversight Commission and many other community groups and leaders are calling on Providence Health & Services to agree to a free and fair election process so workers can make up their own minds about forming a union. The Commission would like to invite you to a peaceful candlelight vigil for fairness to support Providence workers in gaining a free and fair election process.

### Join these Endorsing Organizations and Individuals in Supporting Free and Fair Elections for Providence Health Care Workers

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 Rev. Alcena Boozer  
 Dr. Jill Ginsberg  
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 Rev. Jack Mosbrucker  
 Dick Springer  
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 State Representative Chip Shields  
 State Representative Diane Rosenbaum  
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 Carpenters Local 247  
 Cement Mason Local 555  
 Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council  
 Construction & General Laborers Local 320  
 Communications Workers of America Local 7901  
 IBEW Local 48  
 ILWU Local 5

Inland Boatmen's Union/CRR  
 IUOE Local 701  
 Joint Council of Teamsters Local 37  
 Laborers Local 483  
 Musicians Union Local 99, AFM  
 National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 82  
 Northwest Oregon Labor Council  
 OPHHP  
 OPEIU Local 11  
 Oregon Nurses Association  
 Oregon School Employees Association  
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