



# NASCAR RETURNS TO POCONO RACEWAY

Complete coverage of this weekend's race in Friday's special section and online at [www.poconorecord.com/nascar](http://www.poconorecord.com/nascar)



# POCONO RECORD THURSDAY August 2, 2007

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## LAIRD CLOSING, 375 JOBS LOST

### Company cites flooding, outsourcing as reasons to shut down DWG plant

By **SUSAN KOOMAR**

Pocono Senior Managing Editor  
**DELAWARE WATER GAP** — You know the place if you live around here. It's probably the most high-profile manufacturing plant in the Poconos.

The tidy-looking building has a levee that hugs Interstate 80 just before you get to the toll bridge.

The company has been sold, flooded, flooded again and buffeted by the winds of global competition.

Workers were hired, laid off, hired back.

Local leaders feared for years that those precious technology jobs might slip away for good. Now they will.

Laird Technologies will close its Delaware Water Gap plant by the end of February.

The loss is 375 jobs and a \$15 million payroll.

The loss is a showcase high-tech, international company in a county struggling to create family-sustaining jobs.

And the loss is a steady customer base for a little tourist town's convenience stores, diner and bakery.

"The economic impact to merchants is going to be tremendous," said Walt Conway, mayor of Delaware Water Gap.

The reasons for the closing are many: two major floods and one uncomfortably close call,

the cost savings of overseas outsourcing and the need to consolidate production.

A spokeswoman termed the closing a "wise, but difficult decision."

Some workers will be offered jobs at other Laird plants. Terminations will begin in mid- to late October.

"We have really skilled workers at the Delaware Water Gap facility and 52 locations around the globe," said spokeswoman Michele Kinman.

Some of the work now done in Delaware Water Gap will be sent to Mexico and Asia, she said.

The property is for sale, but the danger of flooding casts a shadow on its future. The Delaware River burst its banks in 2004 and 2005, leaving a sodden mess at Laird, shutting down production and delaying orders for customers.

Laird spent \$1 million on levee improvements that kept its main building dry — just barely — in the June 2006 flood.

"It's unacceptable to investors and customers to take the risk to have the facility flood and shut down again," Kinman said.

Laird makes shielding that blocks electromagnetic interference. You might find Laird

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KEITH R. STEVENSON/Pocono Record

Laird Technologies in Delaware Water Gap. The company will close the plant by the end of February, resulting in the loss of 375 jobs and a \$15 million payroll.

### Loss poses challenges to borough, county

By **HOWARD FRANK**

Pocono Record Writer

The economic impact created by the closing of Laird Industries could be significant, say area leaders. But shock over the news was met with equal parts concern and determination.

Unemployment in the county is likely to grow considerably as a result. Almost 90 percent of the workers at Laird reside

in Monroe County, according to Bob Phillips, chief executive officer and president of the Pocono Mountains Chamber of Commerce.

"Its going to be a massive blow to the community — 375 employees that have now lost their jobs," said Monroe County Commissioners Chairwoman Donna Asure, "That will have a major impact no matter what circum-

stances are surrounding it." Asure said she was disappointed with state and federal agencies, which met with the company several times but were unable to provide the help Laird needed.

Delaware Water Gap Mayor Walter Conway was particularly devastated by the news. Laird resides in his borough, and the company's contribution to the

municipality's tight budget will be deeply felt.

But Conway understood the company's move.

"The operations at Laird's Delaware Water Gap facility have suffered because of the significant flooding of the Delaware River," Conway said.

But with the prospect of fu-

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Pocono Record File Photo

The Laird plant on April 4, 2005, after flood waters had slightly receded. The Delaware River burst its banks during flooding in 2004 and 2005, leaving a sodden mess at the plant, shutting down production and delaying orders for customers.

### Burden of three floods too much to bear

By **DAN BERRETT**

Pocono Record Writer

Nine deaths. More than \$225 million in damage. Over 6,300 property claims closed.

Now you can add 375 high-paying manufacturing jobs to the list of casualties wrought, in part, by the three recent major floods that soaked the areas along the Delaware River.

While global economic trends — such as consolidating operations and hiring less expensive workers — played a major role in the decision to close Laird Technologies in Delaware Water Gap, so did the flooding.

"I wasn't given a ranking of the reasons," said Michele Kinman, a spokeswoman for Laird. "I can tell you that the threat of flooding posed a risk that we could not take — for the shareholders or our customers."

In a letter to Delaware Water Gap Mayor Walter Conway, Laird explained that the facility was closing and cited both the ongoing risk of flooding damage and global competition as the reasons for its decision.

"I think the cheap labor is one aspect," Conway said. But he also noted that the company had tried twice previously to outsource

its labor before returning to the Poconos because it could better ensure quality control here.

Laird's closing is likely to add force to arguments over the Delaware River basin's 13 reservoirs. Conway has championed the idea that the reservoirs are ill-managed and poorly equipped to respond when heavy rains soak the area.

In June, he traveled to Harrisburg with Portland Mayor Kay Bucci, and Diane Tharp, whose house is on the river's banks, to press the point in front of the House Veterans Affairs and Emer-

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## Case of canine flu or kennel cough?

By **BETH BRELJE**

Pocono Record Writer

Trifecta Kennels in Gilbert reopens tomorrow with a clean bill of health after a voluntary shutdown in mid-July.

More than 70 dogs there had been infected by a confirmed case of canine influenza.

The health status of dogs at the Monroe County SPCA, however, is still in question. Tests results for canine influenza won't come back until today or Friday. As a precaution, the facility remains under quarantine.

Trifecta owners chose to remain closed twice the recommended amount of time and they have disinfected kennels

beyond recommendations, said co-owner Lisa Kane.

Symptoms of canine influenza include fever, runny nose and coughing. It can show up anywhere dogs gather. The disease has been mistaken for kennel cough. Because the influenza strain is new, scientists are still learning how it is spread.

Left untreated, the influenza can morph into a sometimes deadly bacterial infection.

A bout of what appears to be kennel cough has made the rounds at the SPCA for three or four weeks, according to Kay Bellesfield, SPCA manager.

In that time, the shelter has adopted out dogs that had the apparent kennel

cough.

"We told people who adopted dogs they needed to have the dogs treated," Bellesfield said. "Nobody had a problem with it then. It's not like it was ignored. Everybody has been treated."

Dr. Ravi Murarka, chief veterinarian for the Pennsylvania SPCA in Philadelphia and the managing head of the Monroe County SPCA, said, "Normally if a dog is sick we do not adopt them out."

Elaine Skypala, chief operating officer for the Pennsylvania SPCA, clarified the policy, saying that if they know what the problem is, the dog is being treated, and people still want to adopt it, they will let it go out.



MARK A. GENITO/Pocono Record

Trifecta Kennels co-owner Lisa Kane plays with, from left, Audie, Keeper and Emmy, three healthy female golden retrievers, in Gilbert on Wednesday.

#### TODAY'S FORECAST



Partly to mostly sunny skies. High 86/90. Low 62/63.  
**Weather, B6**

#### TODAY'S FEATURE

#### FISHER-PRICE TOY RECALL

Fisher-Price is recalling 83 types of toys — including the popular Big Bird, Elmo, Dora and Diego characters — because their paint contains excessive amounts of lead. The recall involves about 1 million products. **Page A5.**

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