

EMAIL

PRINT

SAVE



Kyocera to lay off 250 in S.D. cell division

BY MIKE FREEMAN

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2009 AT 2 A.M.

Kyocera will cut 250 jobs from its San Diego mobile phone division as part of a restructuring linked to its acquisition of Sanyo's cell phone division last year.

The Japanese company will lay off the workers from its Kyocera Wireless division in Sorrento Mesa. The layoffs are across the handset division, spokesman John Chier said, but are most concentrated in engineering and manufacturing.

Kyocera is consolidating wireless engineering functions in Japan after its purchase of Sanyo's cell phone unit last spring for \$375 million. Sanyo added about 1,700 engineers to Kyocera when the two firms joined, Chier said yesterday.

"I think it would be disingenuous to say the market had nothing to do with this move," he said. "That being said, this was something set in motion by the Sanyo acquisition."

Kyocera also will eliminate an additional 110 positions in Chatsworth and in Bangalore, India, as part of the reorganization. The cuts will be completed by the end of March.

Several San Diego technology companies have been shedding jobs in recent months as the recession spreads from housing into the broader economy.

Amylin Pharmaceuticals laid off 364 workers last fall to cut costs. Semiconductor equipment maker Cymer trimmed its work force locally by about 70 workers early this year amid weak orders. And Texas Instruments shed 125 jobs in the county last year when it shut down its operations here.

Since October, the pace of layoffs at local companies has increased, said Mark Cafferty, chief executive of the San Diego Workforce Partnership, which provides training and other services to displaced workers.

The Workforce Partnership gets information through the state Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification system – under which companies notify the state of potential layoffs. During the dot-com bust and early in this recession, job losses were concentrated into one or two industries, Cafferty said.

Not now. "There has really been a steady flow of companies that are letting go of significant numbers of people – or at least they're filing the documentation," he said. "And it has really crossed over into every industry."

At Kyocera, the wireless division employed about 600 workers at year end. Kyocera has other divisions in San Diego, including the North American headquarters that employs about 70, and Kyocera America, which employs about 390 making parts used in semiconductor production.

Kyocera also has a large solar panel manufacturing operation in Tijuana that employs 660 workers.

Other large layoffs recently in the county include HSBC Auto Finance, which cut more than 285 jobs locally in October, and TaylorMade Golf, which let go 170 workers after its acquisition of shirt maker Ashworth.

In addition, retail layoffs are increasing as chains such as Circuit City, Linens 'N Things and Mervyns close stores. At Mervyns, more than 700 local workers lost jobs when the national chain closed its stores in the county, according to the state Employment Development Department.

Mike Freeman: (760) 476-8209; mike.freeman@uniontrib.com