

GUILD LEADER

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Journal to Lay Off 30 From News; No One From Advertising

The Journal will be cutting its entire News Department part-time staff plus five full-time positions. No advertising jobs will be cut.

With one exception, the cuts will result in the least senior employee being laid off. The one exception is a reduction in the number of news online designers from three to two. All the employees in this classification are fulltime. The least senior designer will be laid off unless she qualifies for another job.

In addition to the news part-timer, full timers hired into the News Department on or after May 30, 2006 will lose their jobs. Under the Guild contract, part-time employees are less senior to full time employees.

The last day of work for laid-off employees will be Friday October 10.

The Human Resources Department will be personally notifying laid-off employees beginning Thursday.

Laid-off employees will have the option of receiving the severance package being offered to A.H. Belo workers at other papers.

The Belo severance package calls for 1.25 weeks pay for every year of employment up to 20 years with 2.5 week's pay for every year over 20. The maximum payout is capped at 35 weeks.

Unlike the buyout offered last month, there is no payment for medical coverage. Those accepting the severance package will have to sign a waiver releasing the company from any financial claims. The waiver also means that if

there are rehiring the company is not obligated to call back those who sign it.

Laid-off workers can decline the A.H. Belo severance and be put on a recall list and be called should the worker's job open up again before anyone else is hired. They would only receive two weeks severance. There is no guarantee job opening will occur in the foreseeable future.

Either way, because this is an involuntary layoff, those losing their jobs will be eligible for unemployment benefits, regardless of which option is selected. Laid-off employees will also be paid for unused 2008 and accrued 2009 vacation.

Laid-off workers who have medical insurance will retain coverage though the end of October. After that coverage can be maintained for up to 18 months by paying the insurance premiums.

Everyone who is being laid off is getting two weeks notice. The company has told us there will be no security guard escorts to the door, or sudden disconnecting of your computers.

We have tried to work out with the company what might be called the best way to handle a bad situation.

People, our friends and coworkers, are losing their livelihoods. Families are losing their health insurance and the company is losing gifted and dedicated workers at exactly the time in its history when it needs them the most.

The truth is, there is no 'best' way to handle this.