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## **Governor Doyle Announces Steps Administration, DWD Will Take to Help Domtar Workers**

### *Secretary Gassman Joins Community Rally in Port Edwards to Outline Steps State is Taking to Provide Assistance*

PORT EDWARDS – At a community rally in Port Edwards today, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman laid out the steps Governor Doyle's Administration is taking to help the workers affected by the recent news that Domtar, a paper mill in Port Edwards, will close permanently next year.

"This is very disappointing news for Port Edwards, the entire region, and particularly the hardworking families who will be affected," Governor Doyle said. "These are good jobs that are important to the community. I am committed to helping this community and the hundreds of families who depend on the mill for their livelihood. I have directed my Administration to pursue all opportunities to assist the families who are now in transition and to work with local officials and business leaders to bring renewed economic development to the community."

Secretary Gassman said workers affected by the plant closing should contact their local Job Center to inquire about services by visiting [www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/directory](http://www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/directory) or toll free at 888-258-9966.

"These workers and their families should know that Wisconsin has one of the best programs in the country to help dislocated workers, and we will use every resource available and pursue every avenue possible to help these workers," Secretary Gassman said.

Governor Doyle announced that his Administration is doing the following:

- Governor Doyle has directed DWD Secretary Gassman to form and dispatch a Rapid Response Team to meet with the approximately 500 affected employees to expedite unemployment claims and give workers access to job training and placement services. DWD has already set up an initial Rapid Response meeting with the company and the union for Friday to discuss available services and to schedule worker orientation meetings as soon as possible. Affected workers have access to numerous services to help them become re-employed, including job search and career planning assistance, resume assistance, job training, and access to job search databases.
- DWD will immediately issue a \$25,000 Rapid Response start-up grant to the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board to initiate services for the affected workers.
- DWD will also work with the company and the union to petition for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits from the U.S. Department of Labor, which may allow for the extension of unemployment benefits for two years and up to \$15,000 for additional education and re-training for eligible workers. TAA is a federal program that provides assistance such as job search, relocation assistance, retraining, and income support to workers who have become unemployed because of foreign competition or imports.

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- In addition, DWD will apply to the U.S. Department of Labor for additional funding to assist these workers through the National Emergency Grant (NEG) program, which provides funding to states when significant events create a sudden need for assistance. Services available to workers include assessments, retraining, and job placement services.
- DWD will also assist the North Central Workforce Development Board and other community groups with applying for a \$250,000 regional planning grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. This grant will help these groups determine the skill levels of the available workforce and the needs of area employers so best strategies can be identified to match workers to available jobs that may include retraining for specific occupations.
- Governor Doyle also directed Department of Commerce Secretary Jack Fischer to meet with the company, and to look for opportunities to bring new employers into the area and help existing employers grow to provide new jobs. The state will aggressively use the tools it has available, including tax credits, loans, and training resources, to encourage new investment in the region.