

Three Pathmarks in South Jersey will close



The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. told employees Tuesday that it would close three Pathmark supermarkets, in Cherry Hill, Camden, and Edgewater Park, in 60 days. Union leaders said about 300 clerks, stockers, cashiers, seafood, bakery, and meat and deli workers will lose their jobs.

A&P, which reorganized and emerged from bankruptcy in 2011, owns Pathmark and Super Fresh groceries. With the latest closings, the only Pathmark store in South Jersey will be in Ventnor.

"It did not come as a surprise," said Brian String, president of United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 152. "We had a premonition. We met with our members a month and a half ago and told them that we thought they were going to close these three stores."

String said A&P told the union the company was "losing a lot of money and looking for possible savings and to renegotiate the contract."

Labor officials renegotiated contracts with A&P when the supermarket corporation was in Chapter 11 bankruptcy. "My response was if, they

were going to take the savings and put them into the stores and renovate the stores, we could sit down and have a discussion," String said. "That ended the conversation with the company."

A&P vice president Derrick Kinney confirmed the planned closures, but declined to comment further.

Some of the 56 seafood, bakery, meat cutters, and deli workers will be able to transfer to other Pathmark stores if they have adequate seniority based on "bumping rights" in their contract, String said.

The closings are just the latest, said Sam Ferraino, president of UFCW Local 1360. In January, A&P closed Super Fresh markets in Westmont, Marlton, and Plainsboro, N.J.

It was no surprise to one industry market-research analyst that the Pathmarks were on the chopping block.

"These were not high-volume, extremely high-performing stores in recent years," said Robert Gorland, vice president of Harrisburg-based Matthew P. Casey & Associates. His company performs feasibility studies on sites being considered for new supermarkets.

"Sometimes, it can be that a lease option was coming up. In other cases, the store may be underperforming."

Matthew Casey, owner of the consulting firm, said all three stores were unprofitable. Pathmark's lease in Camden expires next year, Casey said.

With the recent announcement that Camden will be getting a 75,000-square-foot Shop Rite on Admiral Wilson Boulevard, "I guess they [A&P] are getting out while they can," he said.



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http://www.philly.com/philly/business/20130710_A_P_says_it_will_close_three_Pathmark_supermarkets_in_South_Jersey.html#UhlQyC5IAWzJ7i1.99