

Plaskolite

Plaskolite in Sheffield to lay off 90 workers as it prepares to permanently close

- By Heather Bellow, The Berkshire Eagle
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Plaskolite, (formerly Sheffield Plastics), is shown in 2020. The Ohio-based company announced it is laying off most of its 96 employees as it prepares to close the Sheffield factory due to a host of economic factors, including high electricity prices in Massachusetts.

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SHEFFIELD — A company that was churning out plastic shields early in the coronavirus pandemic will be laying off 90 employees in the next 18 months.

Plaskolite Massachusetts LLC will be making the cuts between spring 2025 and spring 2026 as it prepares to close its Berkshire County plant.

Inflation and rising expenses, an aging building and difficulty recruiting skilled mechanical factory workers are among the reasons the plant is closing, according to plant Manager Tim Ryan.

Ryan said the company's 96 employees at the plant off Salisbury Road were told of the cuts last week. All were given an opportunity to relocate to one of the company's two plants in Ohio — either Columbus and Zanesville.

“It's a very difficult decision,” said Ryan, a Great Barrington native and longtime employee. “There are a lot of folks who have been here for a long time.”



Tim Ryan, plant manager at Plaskolite in Sheffield in 2020 with a thin plastic sheet manufactured for protective face shields to be used during the pandemic. The manufacturer of polycarbonate sheeting is laying nearly all its 96 employees as it prepares to close the Salisbury Road factory in 2026. Ryan says a combination of economic and recruitment factors fueled the decision.

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The mood at the factory, Ryan said, is “somber.”

Ohio-based Plaskolite LLC bought Sheffield Plastics in 2018 from Covestro, a spinoff of Bayer MaterialScience. It currently runs 18 factories worldwide, including the Sheffield plant. That's an increase of eight new factories since 2020.

Sheffield Plastics began operating at the Salisbury Road location in 1949. In the 1950s, it found success making hula hoops, fly swatters and fluorescent lighting panels.

The Plaskolite factory turns plastic pellets into a slew of products. It operates around the clock making things like vending machine fronts and fighter jet canopies using thermoplastic sheets that can be molded to specification.

Plaskolite named 3M's supplier of the year

The company [pivoted fast](#) during the pandemic. In 2020, the 113 employees at the Sheffield plant were churning out polycarbonate sheets in various thicknesses for protective barriers and face visors.

In a statement emailed to The Eagle, the company says it will begin winding down Sheffield operations by early 2026. It is also working with the state and county "to provide job assistance."

"Relocating our production," the statement says, "is a necessary step to ensure we continue to deliver upon our high standards for product quality and employee safety, meet the evolving needs of our customers and grow our polycarbonates business."

Sheffield plastics company working nonstop on pandemic supplies

Ryan said the building is aging and needs upgrades to ensure all of this — particularly safety improvements. Such an investment, he added, would be risky given the challenges the company has had recruiting.

High electricity costs in Massachusetts are another factor driving the company out, Ryan said. Indeed, Massachusetts has some of the highest electricity costs in the U.S., according to [U.S. Energy Information Administration](#) data.

Speaking of the timeline for closing, Ryan said the plan is to start disbanding some of the equipment in the first quarter of next year. The layoffs will be phased, he said.

Last week the company notified the [MassHire Department of Career Services' Rapid Response Team](#), as required by federal and state law. The law was created to ensure workers involved in mass layoffs or plants closing will have time to prepare for job transitions.

It was one of two Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification reports filed with MassHire for the week ending Nov. 1.

The last WARN report to affect Berkshire County workers was that of the week ending Sept. 9, when Fresh American LLC (Annie Selke Companies) and corporate parent Rugs USA [announced layoffs of 47 employees](#) in Pittsfield and Lenox by Dec. 31. Rugs USA is closing both Berkshire county locations.

At Plaskolite, some will feel the impact more than others.

“It’s the folks on the [factory] floor,” Ryan said. “They’re the ones who are going to take the hardest hit.”

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