



Concrete plant still in 'maintenance mode'

Clark-Pacific is still struggling with poor economy

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For Clark Pacific, a West Sacramento-based concrete manufacturing company, which opened a new plant in Woodland back in 2008, it would appear that patience has truly become a virtue.

After wrapping up the Woodland plant's inaugural project, a parking structure at the San Jose International Airport, the company found itself in the thick of an economic downturn that has slowed new construction projects across the nation. Hoping to weather the storm, Clark Pacific opted to take a break, throwing the plant into maintenance mode and waiting for things to pick back up.

Now, after having operations in Woodland sit dormant for almost a year, the waiting continues.

"We have a few, very small jobs lined up in the near future," said Thomas Ketron, director of marketing for Clark Pacific. "Other than that, we're still very much in maintenance mode."

While the smaller projects in the Clark Pacific's future fail to compare to the magnitude of the San Jose Airport project, which, at 1.8 million square feet, is the largest precast parking structure in California, they allow the company to continue conducting business during an economic recession that has been particularly unkind to their industry.

According to a recent study conducted by Sageworks, a research firm dedicated to tracking financial data for privately held businesses, companies dedicated to cement and concrete product manufacturing were among the top-ten worst performing industries in the nation, registering a 5.75 percent decline in sales during 2009.

While numbers like these haven't resulted in talks of closing the Woodland plant, they have certainly limited any discussion of bringing back employees who were laid off last spring.

"We're not in any position to talk about opening new positions right now," Ketron said. "We're still looking for some bigger jobs."

As the hunt for the project that could potentially jolt the stagnant plant back to life continues, Clark Pacific prepares to begin work on a small parking structure in Central California, one of the few small jobs that has kept the Woodland plant afloat since last spring.

"It's just another fairly small project," Ketron said, "but jobs like these give us some glimmers of hope in the distance."