

39 Laid Off as Valley Camp Closes Carbon Mine

By Mike Gorrell
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Carbon County's economy sustained another setback this week when Valley Camp of Utah shut down its coal mine above Scofield, laying off 39 employees.

The layoffs occurred after company officials were unable to secure a contract to sell coal from the Belina No. 1 mine, said Benton H. Faulkner, public-relations manager for Valley Camp's parent company, Quaker State Corp.

"We're aggressively seeking contracts, but we don't have a contract now and we're not producing," Mr. Faulkner said. Four hourly and seven salaried employees were retained to maintain the mine so it can be reopened within 24 hours if a contract is obtained, he added.

"This is really hard for us, really bad," said Carbon County Commissioner Emma Kuykendall. "Hopefully, this is temporary."

Helper resident Grant Howell, one of the 39 idled employees, is "optimistic the quality of our coal will put us back into production."

The company gave employees notice May 1 of a potential layoff after the Intermoun-

tain Power Agency did not renew a contract for Valley Camp coal because it had accumulated a large stockpile.

"Right up until the last day, more or less, we were hopeful one of the contracts the company was bidding for would go our way," said Mr. Howell, who has worked 16 years at the mine and, at age 57, feels he is too far away from Social Security and retirement. He and his wife are supporting a granddaughter. One of his sons also was laid off.

"Hopefully, the company will keep the mine and machinery in a status that if we get any order we could report to work and start production immediately."

The United Mine Workers of America office in Price has applied to the state for funding to start job-retraining classes for union personnel, said job coach Wade Hansen.

"Right now, they're on a two-week vacation. Some won't return," he said. "I wish [the layoffs] would end someday. I'm getting pretty tired of it. I'd rather be representing them at the mines than helping them find work."

The Valley Camp mine produced about 540,000 tons of coal annually, Mr. Faulkner said.

FRIDAY, July 3, 1992