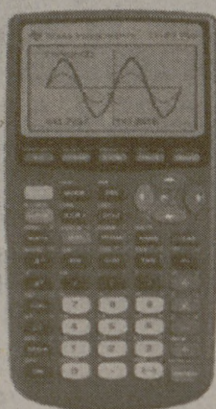


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News

Page 6A

THE BATTALION

Thursday, September 20, 2001

Unions await layoffs from American Airlines

DALLAS (AP) — American Airlines employees could learn as early as Wednesday whether they will still have jobs, as the world's largest carrier grapples with a downturn in business caused by last week's terrorist attacks.

American and other major carriers have already cut their flight schedules by 20 percent, "and we are currently studying other resource issues associated with that, including employees," said Karen Watson, a spokeswoman for American.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an American official told The Associated Press the company would announce layoffs this week but the number of layoffs was unclear.

Unions representing pilots, flight attendants and mechanics have been plotting strategy for protecting as many jobs as possible, convinced that layoffs are coming.

"We're expecting it, we just don't know how it's going to affect flight attendants. We're not in denial," said Leslie Mayo, a spokeswoman for the Association of Professional Flight Attendants, which has about 23,000 members at American.

Leaders of the Allied Pilots Association, which represents American's 11,000 pilots, have talked to airline officials about how furlough provisions of their contract would be applied. The union did not respond to calls for comment.

American and its commuter line, American Eagle, have about 100,000 employees.

Houston-based Continental said Saturday it would lay off 12,000 of its 56,000 employees. Employees are still awaiting details.

A spokeswoman for Dallas-based Southwest Airlines said the low-fare carrier has resumed nearly normal schedule of 2,700 daily flights and was not considering layoffs.

American last furloughed flight attendants in 1981, when it was closing down operations in some cities. Under a contract provision negotiated then and renewed several times, the airline must offer unpaid leave before it can furlough flight attendants.

Workers who accept the leave package will retain their medical and travel benefits and continue to accrue seniority for purposes of pension, Mayo said.

The pilots' union says that an agreement to American's purchase of Trans World Airlines last year could force American to offer early retirement to many pilots before making layoffs.

The unions, however, are concerned American will seek to sidestep the normal rules because of the unusual circumstances of the carrier's current problems: Terrorist attacks that are expected to reduce air travel for months.

Since the attacks, airlines suffered through shutdown of the nation's aviation system, and even since flying was resumed, many planes have flown half-empty. But airlines must still come up with fixed costs such as labor and airplane lease.

Continental Airlines has nearly as much debt capital, according to Salomon Smith Barney, American's parent, AMR Corp. of Fort Worth, in slightly better shape, and Southwest has a debt ratio than either of its Texas rivals.

T-SHIRTS

Continued from Page 1A

and Blue Out organizer and a junior finance major, said the T-shirt demand is already overwhelming his group's supply, and that he is not worried about competing with other retailers.

"What really concerns me is the idea that somebody might be profiting off of this," Bethea said.

The Texas A&M Bookstore in the Memorial Student Center announced Wednesday that proceeds from the sales of its red, white and blue T-shirts will be donated to the Red, White and Blue relief fund.

"The MSC was getting some bad bull from a lot of people who thought they were trying to compete with us," said Nick Luton, a Red, White and Blue Out organizer and a senior civil engineering major. "I know a lot of people were confused about who was sell-

ing which shirts and where the money was going, and we want to make sure everybody knows that every dime that we make is going to charity."

Marc Eckhart, the manager of the bookstore, said the proceeds from the patriotic-themed T-shirts had already been earmarked for charity, but he decided to join the Red, White and Blue Out project to avoid duplicating efforts.

"It's an opportunity to help meet a tremendous demand for these shirts and to help this group that's trying to do something good," Eckhart said.

Bethea said his group has already sold more than 25,000 t-shirts, and even ran out of T-shirts Wednesday morning.

"They're (C&C Creations) printing them as fast as they can, and we'll have 11,000 T-shirts, all colors and sizes, ready to go Thursday morning," Bethea said, and added that the main problem is now

getting enough volunteers to man the tables selling shirts.

Bethea said Red, White and Blue Out has already collected more than \$100,000, roughly half of which will go to designated charities and the other half covers expenses are covered. Another batch of shirts will be printed to meet the swelling demand.

"We expect to sell a lot of shirts on gameday, so we're worried about having too many left over T-shirts," Bethea said.

Also, A&M clubs from around the nation have expressed interest in buying shirts, and Red, White and Blue Out will still be filling those orders next week, Bethea said.

"When we first met to do this out, we debated whether to order 7,000 or 10,000 shirts," Bethea said. "We had no idea the demand would be this overwhelming."

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