

Shut down of turkey plant in Eastern North Carolina, job losses of nearly 1,000 expectedPosted By [Sarah Ovaska](#) On March 14, 2013 @ 1:20 pm In [Uncategorized](#) | [Comments Disabled](#)

The House of Raeford, the second-largest employer in Hoke County, announced today that it plans to shut down its turkey slaughtering plant in coming months



^[1]The shutdown will mean a loss of close to 1,000 jobs in the county in the next six months, and is certain to have a rippling effect on this economically fragile part of Eastern North Carolina with additional turkey growers in the area without contracts to grow turkeys.

The job losses were announced Thursday by the House of Raeford, which said in a [press release](#) ^[2] that the company is shifting to more ready-to-eat chicken products. A steady increase in the price of corn feed coupled with a decrease in interest from American consumers in turkey led to the decision to shut down the turkey plant. In its release, the House of Raeford indicated some of its turkey growers may transition to raising chickens for them.

"We're grateful to the employees and growers who have been an active part of our turkey operation and we are committed to helping each one of them during this transition," said Bob Johnson, the House of Raeford's CEO, in the [press release](#) ^[2].

The House of Raeford is the second-largest employer in Hoke County, behind the county's school system, according to [this 2011 report](#) ^[3] from the N.C. Commerce Department. Unemployment in the county was at 9 percent in December, close to the statewide unemployment rate of 9.2 percent.

The closure of the turkey slaughter plant will happen in the next four to six months and include the loss of 950 plant jobs, according to the company's press release. An additional 30 positions in a turkey hatchery will also be eliminated, though the company said those workers will be offered jobs in the existing 400-employee cooking plant the company also operates in Raeford.

If the lay-offs happen after July 1, as is expected, the unemployed turkey plant workers would be entitled to 12 to 20 weeks of unemployment benefits, instead of the six months of benefits the state previously allowed. The state legislature's massive overhaul of the state's unemployment insurance system, which was signed into law in February by Gov. Pat McCrory, seeks to repay \$2.5 billion owed to the federal government for benefits paid out during the Great Recession.

The new law also made 170,000 long-term unemployed North Carolinians ineligible for federal emergency extended benefits.

The House of Raeford plant shutdown announcement Thursday also comes a week after the McCrory administration announced a major employer, MetLife, was moving to North Carolina, and bringing [2,300 jobs to Cary and Charlotte](#) ^[4]. The state pledged more than \$90 million in incentives to lure the company here.

The largest plant closure in the state occurred in 2003, when Pillowtex textile plant in Kannapolis [shut down](#) ^[5] and 4,300 people lost their jobs.

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[1] Image: <http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2013/03/14/shut-down-of-turkey-slaughter-plant-in-eastern-north-carolina-job-losses-of-nearly-1000-expected/raeford/>

[2] press release: <http://www.houseofraeford.com/Turkey/PDFS/PressRelease.pdf>

[3] this 2011 report: http://accessnc.commerce.state.nc.us/docs/topEmployers/topEmp_37093.pdf

[4] 2,300 jobs to Cary and Charlotte: https://www.google.com/search?q=metlife+announcement+&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a#hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=6Vs&rls=org.mozilla:en-US%3Aofficial&scient=psy-ab&q=metlife+announcement+north+carolina+&oq=metlife+announcement+north+carolina+&gs_l=serp.3..33i29i30i3.3381.5199.0.5346.16.15.0.0.0.4.1j11j1.13.0.les%3B..0...1c.1.5.psy-ab.tLOAj_Q9HM&pbx=1&bav=on.2,or.r_qf.&bvm=bv.43287494,d.dmQ&fp=93906d64688f5901&biw=563&bih=375

[5] shut down: <http://charlotte.news14.com/content/headlines/597779/the-pillowtex-effect--five-years-later/>