Northern Iron Employee Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Northern Iron closing?

Northern Iron has made the difficult decision to permanently cease operations at its St. Paul facility. After extensive efforts to evaluate alternatives and work through environmental permitting and regulatory challenges, the company determined that continued operation of the facility is no longer sustainable.

When will the facility close?

The facility will continue to operate through an orderly wind-down process. The final casting is currently scheduled to be poured on September 30, 2026. Beginning October 1, 2026, employee release dates will be phased based on departmental requirements and business needs as operations are gradually reduced. Employee staffing needs and individual employment timelines may vary throughout this period. Specific employee requirements, release dates, and transition plans will be communicated as schedules are finalized and operational plans become more defined.

Does this closure affect other Lawton Standard facilities?

No. This decision is specific to Northern Iron and the unique circumstances affecting that operation. Other Lawton Standard companies and facilities will continue operating normally.

Will the Company and Union be discussing the impact of the closure on employees?

Yes. The Company and the Union will engage in effects bargaining regarding the impact of the facility closure on represented employees. These discussions may address subjects such as employee transition matters, benefits, and other issues related to the closure. Employees will be updated as information becomes available.

Will everyone lose their job immediately?

No. Operations will continue during the wind-down period, and many employees will be needed to help complete customer commitments, support customers, and assist with closure activities. Specific timelines will be communicated directly to employees.

Who should I contact if I am interested in employment at another Lawton Standard location?

Employees who are interested in employment opportunities at another Lawton Standard location should contact Trish Taylor. Trish can help discuss available opportunities, qualifications, and next steps for consideration.

What happens to my wages and benefits?

Employees will continue to receive their normal pay and benefits while actively employed. Additional information regarding benefits, continuation options, and other transition-related matters will be provided as details become available.

Why am I receiving a WARN notice?

As part of today's meeting, employees are receiving a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act notice. The WARN notice provides information regarding the planned closure of the facility and the potential impact on employment. The notice is being provided to comply with federal and applicable state notification requirements and to give employees advance notice of anticipated employment changes.

Receiving a WARN notice does not mean your employment ends immediately. Many employees will continue working during the wind-down period, and individual employment dates may vary based on operational needs. Employees will continue to receive updates regarding schedules, transition assistance, benefits, and other important information as the closure process moves forward.

Does receiving a WARN notice mean today is my last day of work?

No. The WARN notice is an advance notification of a potential employment loss due to the facility closure. Many employees will continue working during the wind-down period. Your supervisor and Human Resources will provide information regarding your anticipated employment timeline and any changes that may affect your position.

What happens to my unused vacation or PTO?

In accordance with the company's vacation policy, employees will be paid for earned but unused vacation time upon separation from employment. Details regarding the timing of payment and any applicable deductions will be provided as part of the separation process.

What should I tell customers, suppliers, or others who ask about the closure?

Employees should follow company-provided talking points and avoid speculation. The consistent message is that Northern Iron is conducting an orderly wind-down due to regulatory and permitting challenges and that company representatives will communicate directly with affected customers and suppliers regarding specific business matters.

Will customer orders continue to be produced?

The company is reviewing all customer commitments and intends to fulfill as many obligations as reasonably possible during the wind-down. Production priorities are being established, and customers will receive direct communication regarding their orders.

How will employees be kept informed?

Management will continue to provide updates as key decisions are made and milestones are reached. Employees are encouraged to attend meetings, review company communications, and speak with their supervisor or Human Resources if they have questions.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

Employees should contact their supervisor or Human Resources with questions regarding employment, benefits, transition assistance, or other closure-related matters.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Will I receive information about unemployment benefits?

Yes. The company plans to provide information and resources regarding unemployment assistance as part of the transition process.

Am I eligible for unemployment benefits if my employment ends due to the closure?

In many cases, employees whose employment ends because of a permanent plant closure or layoff may be eligible for unemployment benefits through the State of Minnesota. Eligibility is determined by the state, not by Northern Iron.

When can I apply for unemployment benefits?

Employees may apply for unemployment benefits after their employment ends or when they experience a qualifying reduction in hours. Information regarding when and how to apply will be provided closer to your separation date.

Do I have to use all of my vacation or PTO before applying for unemployment?

No. Employees are not required to exhaust accrued vacation or PTO before applying for unemployment benefits. However, eligibility determinations are made by the state based on individual circumstances.

Will Northern Iron contest unemployment claims?

The company does not anticipate challenging unemployment claims that result directly from the permanent closure of the facility. Final eligibility decisions are made by the Minnesota Unemployment Insurance Program.

What information will I need to apply?

Generally, employees should have:

- Their Social Security Number
- Contact information
- Employment history
- Banking information for direct deposit (if desired)

Additional instructions and resources will be provided before separation.

COBRA & HEALTH INSURANCE

What happens to my health insurance when my employment ends?

If you were enrolled in medical, dental, and/or vision insurance, those benefits will end on the last day of the month your employment ended. That means for employees whose last day with Northern Iron is October 1, your will remain enrolled through October 31, 2026. Employees may be eligible to continue their coverage under COBRA.

All other benefits (short & long-term disability, critical illness, accident insurance, voluntary & group life insurance) will end as of the last date of employment.

What is COBRA?

COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act) is a federal law that allows eligible employees and their covered dependents to continue participating in the company's health plan for a limited period after losing coverage due to termination of employment or other qualifying events.

How will I receive COBRA information?

Eligible employees will receive a COBRA election notice from Rippling after their coverage ends. The notice will include enrollment instructions, deadlines, coverage options, and premium costs.

How long do I have to elect COBRA coverage?

Employees will have a limited period, as specified in the COBRA election notice, to make their coverage decision. It is important to review all materials promptly upon receipt.

Will COBRA cost more than my current insurance?

employees are responsible for the full cost of coverage under COBRA, including the portion previously paid by the company, plus any applicable administrative fees. Exact costs will be outlined in the COBRA election materials.

Can my spouse and dependents continue coverage?

Yes. Eligible spouses and dependent children who are covered under the health plan may generally elect COBRA coverage if they qualify under applicable rules.

Are there alternatives to COBRA?

Yes. Depending on individual circumstances, employees may be eligible for:

- Coverage through a spouse's employer plan
- Individual coverage through the Minnesota health insurance marketplace
- Government-sponsored programs if eligible
- In partnership with our broker, you may have options for a more cost-effective alternative than COBRA health insurance. Visit https://www.askhic.com/ or contact Jim Bokshan at 248-840-2074 or jbok99@gmail.com to discuss your options.

- Alternatively, Mylo is a digital insurance agency that partners with carriers. Visit ChooseMylo.com or call 844-863-5950 for more information.

Employees are encouraged to compare costs and coverage options before making a decision.

What happens to my HSA?

If you were enrolled in the Health Savings Account (HSA), the funds are yours to keep. Your Rippling-administered HSA account will be converted into a personal account and will be directly managed by Elevate. More information will be provided at the time of your separation.

What happens to my FSA?

Flexible Spending Account (FSA) plans operate on a "use it or lose it" basis. This means that if your employment ends, you cannot use your FSA funds for expenses incurred after your termination date. However, for any eligible expenses you paid out of pocket during your employment, you can submit claims for reimbursement from your FSA up to 90 days after your termination date. Any remaining unused funds will expire and cannot be accessed.

What happens to my 401K?

If your 401k plan balance is less than $7,000 as of the date of termination, your funds will be automatically distributed to you. If you wish to roll over your funds or take a cash distribution, you can submit your request direction through your account with The Standard at www.standard.com. Please read all documents as there are tax ramifications to distributions.

What happens to my 401K loan?

If you have an existing 401k loan that is being repaid through payroll deductions, additional information will be provided about potential options to continue repaying the loan to avoid possible tax implications.

Where can I get help understanding my benefits and transition options?

Northern Iron and Lawton Standard are committed to helping employees navigate this transition. Employees should contact Trish in Human Resources with questions regarding:

- Separation dates
- Unemployment benefits
- COBRA and healthcare coverage
- Retirement and 401(k) plans
- Stay bonuses
- Effects bargaining discussions and any resulting agreements
- Transfer opportunities
- Final pay and PTO balances

Who can I contact?

A complete list of contact information for benefits, 401k, unemployment, and other service providers will be given to all employees.