State to idle Bradshaw State Jail in Henderson; more than 200 workers will be laid off

The company that runs Bradshaw State Jail in Henderson plans to lay off 229 employees as the Texas Department of Criminal Justice will idle the prison on Aug. 31 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Management & Training Corp. made the announcement in a letter dated Monday to the Texas Workforce Commission to comply with the U.S. Worker Adjustment and Retraining Act. The TDCJ website shows the facility has 266 employees. The letter, signed by Christina Pignatelli, labor and employment counsel based at MTC corporate headquarters in Centerville, Utah, cited an effort by the TDCJ to change how it moves and brings in inmates to reduce exposure to the COVID-19 pandemic. "This has resulted in a nearly 25% decline in inmate population," Pignatelli wrote. "MTC expects this decline in population to continue. Moreover, due to COVID-19 the educational programming has been limited." Pignatelli was unavailable for comment Thursday. "Based on these multiple unforeseeable business circumstances, MTC was unable to give full notice of the reduction in force to 23 employees," she wrote. "These employees will be permanently laid off effective July 3, 2020. The remaining staff will be laid off effective August 31, 2020." John Clary, executive director of the Henderson Economic Development Corp., said he met Thursday morning with MTC representatives to discuss the difference between idling and shutting down the prison. "The main thing to know is the state is idling the plant, which is very different from closing the plant," Clary said. Clary said the prison population in Texas and throughout the nation is declining. He said inmates at Bradshaw State Jail serve short sentences for nonviolent crimes. MTC took over operations at Bradshaw in September 2017 after CoreCivic lost its bid for renewal.