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## USA Announces Round of Layoffs

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By [Warren Ferster](#)

WASHINGTON — Space shuttle operator United Space Alliance (USA) has announced plans to lay off 15 percent of its 8,100-strong work force effective Oct. 1 in anticipation of the orbiter fleet's retirement next year.

Currently there are just two more missions on the space shuttle manifest, one scheduled for no earlier than Nov. 1 and the next for Feb. 26, 2011. NASA plans to rely exclusively on Russian Soyuz vehicles to get astronauts to the international space station after then until a new generation of commercially operated U.S. systems comes on line several years from now.

The reduction in force is expected to affect 800 to 1,000 employees in Florida, 300 to 400 in Texas and 10 in Alabama, Houston-based USA said in a press release July 6.

“Our workforce has known for several years that the Space Shuttle Program has been scheduled to end, but layoffs are always difficult for everyone involved,” Virginia Barnes, USA president and chief executive, said in a prepared statement. “We are committed to making this transition as smooth as possible.”

The affected employees will receive severance packages and assistance finding new jobs, said USA, a joint venture of Boeing Co. of Chicago and Lockheed Martin Corp. of Bethesda, Md., that was created to maintain and operate the shuttle fleet.

“Though USA will be a significantly smaller company after the Space Shuttle Program is completed, we are optimistic about our future,” Barnes said. “USA has a great deal to offer in the way of skills, experience and expertise, and we are looking forward to providing our unique capabilities to a wide variety of new and existing customers.”