

Front Page

Haverhill

NH News

Local News

Editorial

Sports

Lifestyle

Business

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Raytheon looking to hire 1,000 statewide

By Kathleen McLaughlin

Staff Writer

Raytheon Co. is looking to hire 1,000 people this year in Massachusetts, continuing a recent trend driven by two big contracts.

"This is our annual target for this year, so we've been working on it hard since January," spokeswoman Sabrina Steele said. "We had a similar target last year."

The number was news to Ziyad Salameh, chairman of the electrical and computer engineering department at University of Massachusetts Lowell, despite the fact that Steele said Chief Executive Officer William Swanson made the hiring plans public at the company's annual meeting May 5 in Washington, D.C.

"Oh, wonderful," Salameh said. "This is in the right direction. This is something good. They were laying off people."

Raytheon has about 11,000 employees in Massachusetts, and nearly half of them are in the Merrimack Valley. Integrated Defense Systems headquarters in Tewksbury has 1,850 employees, and the Andover center has 3,600. Another growing campus within the Integrated Defense Systems business unit is the missile defense center in Woburn, which replaced the aging Bedford facility.

Integrated Defense Systems, which works on the Patriot missile, the next-generation Navy destroyer and the surveillance radar Cobra Judy, includes four sites in Massachusetts, as well as sites in Washington, Portsmouth, R.I., and Huntsville, Ala.

Raytheon spokesman Steve Brecken could not say how many of the 1,000 new hires would go to the local campuses.

Hiring in Massachusetts, part of a plan to hire 5,000 people nationwide, is driven by the Cobra Judy and Navy destroyer contracts, Steele said. Raytheon is working on the electronics and computer systems for the new U.S. Navy destroyer, a \$2.9 billion contract awarded to Northrop Grumman Corp. in April 2002. Raytheon won the \$1 billion contract to upgrade Cobra Judy, the Navy's computer-driven radar, in December. Half of that work will be done in Massachusetts.

The amount of work available to Raytheon doesn't mean jobs for the masses in the Merrimack Valley. Raytheon is looking for people with engineering degrees, and Integrated Defense Systems President Mark Russell has said those people are hard to find in the quantity that Raytheon needs them.

"If you really look at the number of students graduating, you are pretty much going to have to target pretty much anyone you can," Russell said in an interview after a conference that Raytheon hosted with Massachusetts education officials this spring.

Steele said most of the engineers Raytheon hires are electrical engineers with specialties in areas such as radar or software architecture. She said the 1,000 will include new graduates and mid-career professionals.

"The lack of an engineering work force is actually a national problem," said Kathleen Rubin, assistant dean at the University of Massachusetts Amherst College of Engineering.

Russell, a Weston resident, earned his master's degree at UMass Amherst, and the company has a long-standing, close relationship with the university. Raytheon hires more engineers from UMass than anywhere else, Rubin said. Even so, the company would have had 25 electrical engineers, 52 mechanical engineers and 55 computer engineers to choose from in the most recent graduating class.

Raytheon imposes some restrictions of its own. For example, new hires must be U.S. citizens because Raytheon is a defense company, Russell said.

Engineers can still make a lot of money just out of school, typically starting at around \$50,000, Rubin said. Although she wasn't aware of

Raytheon's internal hiring quota, she said, "This year in general was better for hiring engineers than the previous two."

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