Gulf Island Foresees 700 Jobs In Texas, LA

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HOUMA, La. (AP) -- The CEO of Gulf Island Fabrication, a leading manufacturer of offshore rigs and drilling platforms, says the company intends to hire hundreds of workers in Louisiana and Texas as it begins work on new projects.

The Houma-based company has subsidiaries in the Houma area and at Aransas Pass, Texas.

The Courier of Houma reports (http://bit.ly/r9ljaI) that Gulf Island CEO Kerry Chauvin expects by year's end to add 500 jobs in Aransas Pass, Texas, and 200 in Houma.

In April, the company announced it would build a hull for Williams, a natural-gas company with several offshore facilities. In June, Gulf Island won the contract to build a $29.5 million dry dock at the LaShip yard at the Port of Terrebonne. The company also has ongoing work from older contracts, including the fabrication of several towboats and a 335-foot lift boat.

"We do have a long-term backlog, and we are looking for employees who have the training and want to work," he said. "We have already started hiring, and we need to build up our labor force to meet the requirements of these large contracts."

Chauvin said bidding activity slowed down about four years ago. Prior to that, the company's employment levels hovered around 2,000. By December 2010, levels had fallen to 1,250.

Chauvin said that because finding "drug-free, able bodies willing to work fairly long hours" can be difficult, Gulf Island has beefed up its training program, so it can lessen its need for experienced workers.

He said the company has never tried to build up its staff at such a clipped pace before.

"When we built up to 2,000 before, it was over several years," he said. "But I think we'll be creative enough to find the right people we need to do these projects."

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