Deal reached between Cooper Tire, Texarkana union

The Associated Press

Cooper Tire & Rubber Co. announced a tentative contract agreement Friday with its union workers in Texarkana, avoiding a repeat of a labor dispute in Ohio in which the company locked out more than 1,000 plant workers there.

The company and United Steel Workers Local 752L released a joint statement announcing the four-year deal. Details of the agreement won't be released until union members vote on the contract next week, the company and union said.

"Both sides worked hard to reach a four-year agreement that both the plant and the community can be proud of," said David Boone, president of the local union. "Of all the negotiations I have been involved with, this one was conducted in the most professional manner."

The sides last negotiated in 2008, when the union agreed to a salary freeze and other concessions to try to avert the plant's closure. Cooper Tire eventually decided to close its plant in Albany, Ga.; keeping open factories in Texarkana, Findlay, Ohio; and Tupelo, Miss.

The union had announced the tentative deal shortly after midnight Friday, when the contract was set to expire. The Texarkana plant has about 1,500 employees and makes 450 different types of tires for passenger cars and light trucks.

"I am extremely pleased that our negotiating teams reached a responsible agreement that will benefit our employees and our customers for many years to come," said Scott Cole, manager of the Texarkana plant.

Since late November, more than 1,000 union members have been locked out in Findlay — where Cooper Tire is based. The company ordered the lockout after the union's members voted down a tentative three-year agreement by a 2-to-1 margin. Terms of that offer were not disclosed.

Cooper Tire shares rose 68 cents to $15.03 in midday trading Friday.

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