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Lockheed Martin to bring 140 jobs

By Jason Soifer

Special to the Tribune

Lockheed Martin is opening a flight service station here early next year.

Dan Courain, vice president and program manager of flight services for Lockheed Martin, officially announced the aerospace giant's move to the area at the Prescott Valley Economic Development Foundation meeting Thursday morning.

Courain said Lockheed Martin is in final negotiations on a building lease.

"By early next year, we'll be in full-blown construction here and by March or April of next year we'll actually move operations from the (Prescott) airport over to our new operations facility in Prescott Valley," he said.

Steve Rutherford, with Prescott Valley Commercial Development, said the Lockheed Martin is moving into a roughly 50,000-square-foot building in the Big Sky Business Park at 9807 E. Valley Road.

Terms of the lease are not available, according to Rutherford, who said there are no plans to add a second level to the building at this time.

There are about 40 people currently working at the Prescott service station, according to Courain, who said they are going to hire 100 additional employees.

Ted Sturm, director of human resources for Lockheed Martin, said all Prescott facility employees, who are currently employed by the Federal Aviation Association, were offered employment.

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Sturm said about 96 percent accepted jobs with Lockheed Martin. Sturm added that wages are in the mid-\$70,000 range plus benefits.

"That is far more (employee retention) than we expected," Sturm said. "We sweetened the pot a little bit."

But there is one potential snag.

Courain said the FAA, which lost in its bid to maintain control of the service centers, protested the decision awarding the \$2.2 billion 10-year contract to Lockheed Martin.

According to Courain, a decision on the FAA's protest could come as early today (Friday).

"We feel very, very confident that the protest will not be held and we will be able to proceed as we currently are," he said.

Sturm said the ball is in the FAA's court, but he added that it isn't likely the decision will be overturned.

"There are too many wheels in motion," he said.

Courain said Lockheed Martin is closing 38 of the 58 flight service stations nationwide they were awarded control of in early February.

Courain explained that there are over 2,200 flight service specialists at the 58 stations across the country. Courain said those that accept job offers with Lockheed Martin will wake up the morning of Oct. 4 as private sector employees.

Courain said flight service specialists provide weather updates and assist with flight plans.

"As pilots call in both before and after they take off and after they are in the air these flight service specialists can provide information to them in terms of what the weather is like both where they are at the moment and what the projected weather is going to be over the next couple of hours or days,"

He added that the new hub is also going to serve as a training facility. "So all new flight service specialists that come to work for us over the next 10-years will pass through our Prescott Valley facility to be trained," Courain said.

Courain said he is talking with Embry Riddle University about working together to help with the training of new specialists.

"We're very, very excited to be here and we look forward to a long relationship," he said.