

A new start

Delphi workers consider buyouts

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The newest round of buyout offers for Delphi workers brought Lisa Miller a step closer to her dream of becoming a surgical nurse.

Before Friday's announcement that Delphi would offer employees as much as \$140,000 to leave the company, Miller wasn't eligible for any buyout plan. But with 12 1/2 years seniority, she now qualifies for the top amount - which would come to about \$105,000 after taxes.

"I am excited," Miller said. "I just got offered to work at a plant in Shreveport, La. But who knows what's going to happen if I uproot and go another place? I could go down there and get laid off."

The Flint resident is among thousands of Delphi workers considering the newest buyout offers. Delphi, with about 33,000 U.S. hourly employees, wants to eliminate thousands of jobs as part of a plan to exit Chapter 11 bankruptcy in mid-2007.

The agreement announced Friday expands a buyout offer made in March to only workers with or more 27 years' seniority and left low-seniority people like Miller hanging.

The new option, similar to one offered earlier to GM employees, offers buyouts of \$140,000 to workers with 10-26 years' seniority and \$70,000 to those with less than 10 years.

A small group of workers who joined Delphi in the past year and received different benefits, would receive up to \$40,000 to give up their jobs.

Delphi employees who accept a buyout will receive no other benefits from GM except for whatever accrued pensions they might have.

For Miller, 35, taking the \$140,000 is an easy decision. She already was on the telephone Monday to learn where to sign up. The deadline to apply for the previous offers is June 23, but a deadline for the new offers has not been established, according to the official UAW Web site, uaw.org.

Miller plans to start nursing classes June 23 at Baker College, and the buyout will allow her to accelerate her plans. She now can take classes full-time and hopes to complete the program in two years.

QUICK TAKE

Newest buyouts

Delphi Corp., the UAW and General Motors on Friday announced a new round of buyout offers to Delphi employees.

Under the plan:

- Employees with at least 26 years, but less than 27 years, are now eligible for a pre-retirement program that will pay them \$2,750 a month until they retire with 30 years' seniority.

- Employees with 10 or more years are eligible for \$140,000 to sever all ties with Delphi and GM except for vested pension benefits.

- Employees with less than 10 years are eligible for a \$70,000 buyout.

- A small group of workers who joined Delphi in the past year and received different benefits can get up to \$40,000 to give up their jobs.

- The offers are subject to U.S. Bankruptcy Court approval.

Miller is married and has three daughters ages, 6, 12, 17. Her husband, a second-shift worker at Delphi, plans to retire and take a \$35,000 buyout.

Area financial planners said lump-sum payments are perfect for people like Miller.

"It opens a door for a lot more people, but again it's \$140,000 to sever ties and give up all benefits except for the accrued pension," said David Kudla, chief executive officer for Mainstay Capital Management in Grand Blanc.

"This (\$140,000) helps her (Miller) financially to be able to implement her plan and achieve her goal."

Other employees have mixed reactions about the new buyout offers.

Carol Moorman, 50, of Genesee Township, and Tracy Shaheen, 32, of Flint Township, each have 11 years' seniority, work as apprentices and have husbands at Delphi with more seniority than they have. But they're making different decisions.

Moorman and her husband, Bob, plan to take the buyout, while Shaheen and her husband, Shaheen Shaheen, plan to stay with the hope of flowing back to area GM plants.

"I like my job, especially since I started the apprenticeship," Tracy Shaheen said. "When you clock out, the day is done. You don't have to think about work."

Bob Moorman has 30 years' seniority, and was waiting to see if there were any buyout chances for his wife before he retires.

"I feel very fortunate," Carol Moorman said. "It doesn't happen very often where you have the option to get money to retire. It's just the right thing for me, personally."

It's difficult to project how many Delphi workers will take the newest offer. The \$140,000 and \$70,000 options have been open to GM workers since March, but they haven't been as popular as the other options, such as the \$35,000 for those with 30 or more years seniority, Kudla said.
