

State layoffs begin; 1,400 lose jobs

By GEOFFREY TAYLOR

ALBANY (AP) — More than 1,400 state workers got what could be their last paychecks from New York State yesterday.

However, state officials claim many could be back on the job before long.

The first round of state worker layoffs went into effect at the close of the day as part of Gov. Mario M. Cuomo's plan to reduce the state work force to help close what he had said could be a \$1.8 billion budget deficit.

Some 1,291 permanent positions and 116 temporary positions were cut, effective yesterday, said Carol Schlageter-Chady, a spokeswoman for the state Office of Employee Relations.

"We are certain the number of human beings affected is less," she said, while explaining that each state agency is trying to match available state jobs with the qualifications of workers being fired.

As part of the Cuomo plan, another 1,311 firings are planned for later this month, 240 more on Oct. 1 and an additional 530 on Jan. 4, 1984, according to Ms. Schlageter-Chady.

Guidelines for voluntary furloughs are expected to be drafted in "the next several weeks," she added, in hopes of averting another 1,000 position cuts, which might also be needed next year.

The voluntary furloughs, she said, would range from employees taking off a summer without pay or working four-day weeks for several months.

Public employee union officials were upset that any state workers were being fired.

William McGowan, president of the Civil Service Employees Association, announced he would hold a news conference today to explain the objections of the state's largest public employee union.

"He (McGowan) plans to raise hell about why in the world the state is going through with the layoffs when the figures show they aren't needed," said CSEA spokeswoman Melinda Carr.

CSEA officers, she said, claim the layoffs aren't needed because thousands more workers than expected have opted to retire because of incentives approved by the state Legislature to help reduce the work force.

Ira Kleiman, spokesman for the South Beach Psychiatric Center on Staten Island, said the Ocean Breeze facility is slated to lose 30 positions May 25.

He said some of the affected workers may be able to retain their jobs by bumping "less senior" employees at other state facilities.

Under Cuomo's original budget, South Beach was slated to lose 70 positions.

John Mauhs, deputy state comptroller in charge of the state Employees Retirement System, said yesterday the number of workers taking retirement will "probably end up between 7,500 and 8,000" for the period March 1 to May 31.

State officials had expected only about 5,000 employees to retire during that period, even with

the special incentives.

However, Ms. Schlageter-Chady said most of those workers have until May 27 to withdraw their applications for retirement, meaning the state does not yet have an accurate count on how many projected layoffs could be averted as a result of an increase in retirements.

State officials have also warned that many of the retirements may come in jobs that can't be left unfilled — prison guards, for example.

In the first round of cuts, the Taxation and Finance Department was hit the hardest — 240 positions cut, Ms. Schlageter-Chady said.

Other large position cuts occurred in the Transportation Department (236), Office of Mental Health (194), the Motor Vehicles

Department (171), and the Office of Mental Retardation (160).

Several agencies reported no layoffs in the first round, including the governor's own Executive Chamber, the Environmental Conservation Department and Attorney General Robert Abrams' office.

Cuts in the Tax Department's work force were criticized yesterday by the state Council of Retail Merchants.

When the department sent out layoff notices last month, Tax Commissioner Roderick Chu said he planned to close regional offices.

"Only the crooks benefit when needed tax enforcement efforts are reduced," said James Quaremba, president of the retail merchants council. "This is a false economy."