

NASA predicts thousands of job cuts

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U.S. space officials said between 5,800 and 7,300 workers will lose their jobs over the next three years as NASA's shuttle fleet is retired.

In a report to Congress, NASA said the biggest cuts will occur at the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, Fla., where job losses could go as high as 6,800, the Houston Chronicle reported Wednesday.

Up to 2,300 jobs, mostly contractor positions, will be cut at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, the newspaper said. About 82,000 people work at the space agency's 10 U.S. facilities in the United States, including major installations in Texas, Florida and Louisiana.

The unemployment projections do not account for retirements. NASA said about 25 percent of the shuttle's work force will be eligible to retire by the time the shuttle program ends.

NASA said it hopes to start selecting contractors for the agency's moon ship program in 2011. The space agency said it plans to begin launches of the Orion moon capsule and Ares I rocket by March 2015.

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