

Ford shuts French transmission plant

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The Ford transmission plant near Bordeaux had been faced with closure since February 2018

A Ford plant that produced transmissions in southwestern France shut down for good on Wednesday after the carmaker brushed aside efforts save some operations at the facility that had employed up to 3,600 people.

The factory in Blanquefort, outside Bordeaux, was scheduled to close on July 31 but "people arrived this morning and were told to go home, and that there was no point in coming back," union activist Eric Troyas told AFP.

"People were crying. They were thrown out like trash," he said, adding that managers of the plant that opened in 1972 and recently employed around 850 people had taken advantage of a thin union presence during the [summer months](#) to shut it down early.

Ford first said it would close the site in February 2018 but until late February this year there was some hope it could be sold to the Franco-Belgian equipment manufacturer Punch Powerglide, which had floated a plan to save around half the jobs.

On Wednesday, "the assembly lines were empty and Ford did not try to keep people occupied, they emptied their lockers and left," works committee member Gilles Lambersend said.

A spokesman for Ford France told AFP that the "production is indeed finished," before noting that the plant had already been operating at a minimum level.

The French government had tried to come up with a solution for the site, and vowed in February to make the US automaker pay for laid-off staff, a clean-up of the plant, and efforts to implant new industrial activity there.

Ford had received around 15 million euros (\$17 million) in state aid in recent years, but the government acknowledged it could not demand it be reimbursed.

Ford announced in June it would slash 12,000 jobs across Europe.

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