

Rettew follows natural-gas industry's 'wet gas' shift

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The ongoing shift in natural gas drilling from dry gas to wet gas regions has led to staffing shifts at Lancaster County-based engineering firm Rettew Associates Inc., President Mark Lauriello said this morning.

The company is seeing more business in western Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio and less in the Northern Tier, and has adjusted personnel accordingly, Lauriello said.

"Everywhere we could, we shifted people west," he said.

A number of employees in [Rettew's](#) Northern Tier offices were offered temporary and permanent transfers, he said. Not all were able to relocate, and that led to some layoffs, "which is challenging," Lauriello said. Rettew's overall employment has declined slightly, from a peak of about 450 to 438 or so, he said, or less than 3 percent.

"We're still hiring," he said.

"Dry gas" is mostly methane, used for energy; "wet gas" contains other hydrocarbons such as ethane and butane. Gluts of dry gas and resulting price slumps have led drillers to focus on the more profitable wet gas, the components of which can be extracted and sold at a premium.

Rettew has been among the region's fastest growing firms for a number of years. Its expansion has been driven primarily by its embrace of engineering work for the natural gas industry, which buoyed the firm as others struggled in the recession.

In 2012, [Rettew was the fastest-growing company](#) on the Engineering News-Record's nationwide [Top 500](#) list of design firms. [Revenue doubled](#) from fiscal 2010 to 2011 and employment grew from 215 to 350. Rettew's fiscal year begins in July.

The past two quarters have seen a retrenchment, but business is picking up again, Lauriello said. The company's Colorado office just secured a contract for natural gas work in the [San Juan basin](#) in New Mexico.

"It was a good thing for us to slow down," he said, adding it gave the firm time "to catch our breath."

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