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Papé Group steps heavily into heavy diesel truck sales

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When Papé Group swallows Roberts Motor Co. on Monday, the sprawling Eugene-based Papé will be adding a third major division to its seven-state operations: One, forklifts; Two, construction equipment; and now the third, Kenworth heavy diesel trucks sales and service.

Papé Group, a privately owned company, declined to disclose the price it paid for the assets of the Portland-based trucking firm and its additional outlets in Eugene, Medford and Redmond.

Papé Group has not pledged to retain the 30 employees at the trucking company's Eugene branch or the 140 Roberts had employed companywide, said Tim Clevenger, Papé Group's director of corporate development.

"Right now, we don't have all the details of who's doing what," he said. "We really just unfortunately don't know all the ins and outs and details."

Papé Group will conduct an assessment of its workforce needs and then allow Roberts employees to apply for jobs at the combined firm that's now known as Papé Kenworth, Clevenger said.

Those hired will join Papé's two-generation, 70-year-old company that employs 450 people in Eugene and a total of 2,200 in Oregon, Washington, California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana and Arizona.

Papé Group made its first foray into diesel trucks last July when it purchased Central California Kenworth, including its five dealerships in Bakersfield, Fresno, Stockton, Paso Robles and Madera.

The Roberts purchase last week brings the total number of Kenworth dealerships to nine.

Besides sales and service, the outlets will provide financing and leasing for fleets and individual owner operators.

"Rapidly it's become one of our major divisions," Clevenger said.

Papé Kenworth will deal in heavy diesel trucks that haul freight, and medium diesel trucks, such as those used to move construction equipment between sites.

The heavy trucks sell for \$30,000 to \$150,000.

Papé Kenworth will go head-to-head with Brattain International Trucks, which has outlets in Springfield, Portland, Salem, Albany and Bend.

Brattain should be "nervous to some degree" about competing with the new truck muscle of the Papé Group, Clevenger said.

Other competitors will include Farwest Truck and Tec Equipment.

Dan Hollingshead will be chief executive officer at Papé Kenworth and Chris Wetle will be president.

"Kenworth customers in Oregon will now be able to experience Papé's outstanding sales, service and support, as we further our mission to provide superior products that offer exceptional value backed by consistent, high quality customer service," Wetle said in a prepared news statement.

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