

Fact Sheet

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS UNION MEMBERS MAY ASK MANAGERS

When do I start collecting strike pay? Day 1 or Day 15?

Usually, strike pay is not paid until the strike drags on for some time, but every union is different. It is most often 10 days, or two weeks. PLUS, to collect strike pay, you have to work the picket line or do other duties the union may assign you, including keeping your colleagues from crossing the picket line. Many of our employees can't strike because they know they must support their families.

How much IS strike pay, since it is not a full paycheck?

Only the union can say for sure, but usually it is a fraction of your paycheck.

I understand my benefits will stop if we go out on strike. What if I get sick?

Strikers are not entitled to benefits. You have the right to pay for continued benefits. Continued healthcare benefits would cost you about \$1500/month for family coverage. Remember, currently, the hospital pays an average of 88 cents of every dollar your healthcare plan costs. Strikers have to pay this hospital portion as well as their own contribution if they want to continue benefits.

Can my department be outsourced while I am gone?

Yes. Work can be re-designed or re-organized during a strike, and frequently that happens as managers, supervisors, replacement staff and our own employees who cross the line continue to perform the work.

Is there a guarantee I will get my job back?

No. "If the object of the strike is to obtain from the employer some economic concession such as higher wages, shorter hours, or better working conditions, the strikers are called economic strikers. They retain their status as employees and cannot be discharged but they can be replaced by the employer. If the employer has hired bonafide permanent replacements who are filling the jobs of the economic strikers when the strikers apply unconditionally to go back to work, the strikers are not entitled to re-instatement at that time." P. 5, *NLRB's Guide to Basic Law and Procedure*.

A hospital in South Jersey had a nursing strike and most of the nurses were permanently replaced. Can that happen to me?

Union nurses at Lourdes Medical Center of Burlington County in Rancocas struck for more than a year. About 280 RNs walked out, and 70 crossed the picket line. The Hospital hired over 140 permanent replacements and re-organized the work to be more efficient. The new nurses petitioned to remove the union and the hospital is union-free today. It also went from being in the bottom quarter in patient satisfaction at Catholic Health East to the top quarter in the month following the strike.

Will I be fined by the union if I cross the picket line because I need to work?

The union CAN fine members who cross picket lines. In order to avoid fines, members can resign from the union and then cross the picket line without worrying about fines. Employees are never required to be members of the union in order to keep their jobs.

If the union finally agrees to the hospital's offer, employees will have to start paying dues again but they could elect to be dues paying non-members. Dues paying non-members would still be covered by the contract and represented by the union. For more on employees rights, go to www.nrtw.org or www.nlr.gov.

Is there any guarantee that a strike will get us what we want? What do we want badly enough to strike - and will we get that for sure?

The hospital's final offer has been implemented and it does not cut anyone's pay. The new contract does raise some pay rates and provides for thousands of dollars in incentives and tuition reimbursement enhancements. The union is demanding we go back to the old contract, which would cause a reduction in pay to some people, as well as a loss of opportunity for bonuses and the clinical ladder for everyone. You would also be required to resume dues payments of about 2% coming out of your paychecks. YOUR union is demanding that you help make it more money by cutting the size of your own paycheck. If they strike, it could be even worse . . . you would be giving up a paycheck completely in the event of a strike.

How long would we be on strike?

No one can say for sure... If the union says it will only be a one day strike, you should ask them if they can guarantee you won't be out longer. The hospital will have contracts with replacement agencies that last much longer. The hospital must honor these contracts. You may have to wait until these contracts have ended before you can come back. This may take several days.

What if patients stop coming to the hospital because of the strike? Would we be guaranteed that we would get our jobs back?

No. If patient volume decreases, or the public simply chooses not to come here anymore there is no guarantee that we will need as many staff.

Won't this hurt our chances of keeping the EMS contract?! Won't a non union provider have an edge?

If there is a strike, the city could consider a non-union provider like McCabe. That way they would not have to worry about work stoppages.

Please ask your supervisors or manager, or come to Human Resources to get a copy of the hospital's contract offer and the facts about thousands of dollars in increases available to employees in this offer... increases the union has demanded we roll back and take away just so it can keep collecting its dues.