



Frequently Asked Questions about Going on Strike

Information for strike preparation at the City of Portland

What does it mean to be on strike?

A strike means we collectively withhold our labor to show the City that our work has value and that services do not happen without us. Contract negotiations are about power, and our power comes from our ability to stand together.

During a strike members do not report to work, do not perform City work, do not check City email or voicemail, do not use Teams, and do not access City systems until the strike ends or the Union gives different instructions.

But a strike is not just staying home. A successful strike means showing up for each other and making our fight visible. That can include joining picket lines, attending rallies and actions, talking with community members, helping with food, rides, supplies, signs, chants, or checking in with coworkers who are unsure or anxious. Not everyone will be able to participate in the same way, but everyone who is striking should stay connected and help build the collective power needed to win a fair contract. The goal is to show the City that our work matters, our unity matters, and our future is worth fighting for.

If our Union is on strike, what happens if I cross the picket line?

By crossing the picket line, you would be weakening the strike, hurting your coworkers, and threatening everyone's chances to get a fair contract.

Additionally, anyone who crosses a picket line loses their legally protected rights to strike. You cannot uncross a picket line. By crossing the picket line you are agreeing to the City's contract.

Can I be fired for striking? Can the City replace members?

Going on strike is a legally protected collective action. Any form of retaliation by the City, including firing, is a potential Unfair Labor Practice (ULP), which your Union will pursue to the fullest extent of the law.

The City may try to continue operations during a strike, including through managers, non-striking employees, temporary staffing, contractors, or other operational plans. Members should not assume the City will shut down completely. PROTEC17 cannot guarantee how the City will act in every situation. That is why members should follow official PROTEC17 instructions and contact your Union immediately if they experience threats, discipline, or retaliation.



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What is the difference between a rally, informational leafletting, and a practice picket?

These terms may be used interchangeably by leadership when discussing escalating actions against the City while building our credible strike threat. The difference between a rally or practice picket and an actual strike line is that employees have not walked off the job or are not withholding their labor. A rally, informational leafletting, or practice picket action will occur at times when employees are off the clock, such as lunch, evenings, or weekends. You are expected to attend on your own personal time. Additionally, these events may not prevent other employees from working or discourage anyone from working or doing business with the City.

Practice pickets are critical steps in building momentum and testing our internal organization. They help members feel comfortable with the experience of walking on a picket line.

What if I have vacation scheduled during a strike?

If you are on strike, strike days are unpaid. You cannot use vacation leave or comp time to be paid for days you are striking. If you have approved vacation plans that extend beyond the strike, contact PROTEC17 for guidance about your specific situation.

What if I have pre-approved sick leave, FMLA, medical leave, or surgery scheduled?

If you are on approved medical or protected leave, follow the rules for that leave and contact PROTEC17 if you are unsure how the strike affects you. You may still be able to support striking workers.

What if I am still on probation?

It is illegal to fire a worker for striking. This includes any probationary employees. While probationary employees are “at will” and not subject to just cause standards for termination, striking is a legally protected act. The City cannot discipline an employee for engaging in this protected speech. The union will vigorously defend anyone from illegal retaliation by the City.



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What happens if there's bumping while we're on strike?

Based upon the timing of the Core Services Realignment implementation and the earliest possible strike date, this is extremely unlikely. However, City policy requires notification and time for bump elections. In our experience this has only occurred when an employee is in paid status.

Can striking workers apply for unemployment insurance?

Yes, Oregon now allows limited unemployment insurance benefits for eligible striking workers of up to 10 weeks. Benefits are not automatic, do not begin immediately, and do not fully replace wages. Members should create or update their State of Oregon Employment Department (OED) online account early, file required weekly claims, respond promptly to OED requests, and keep records of required work-seeking activities.

If you later receive back pay or another payment covering the same period, that may affect your unemployment claim. Watch for official PROTEC17 guidance before and during any strike.

Will we receive retro pay?

Retro pay is common in public-sector bargaining, but it is not guaranteed. As our contract will be retroactive back to January 1, 2026, your Bargaining Team will fight for retro pay back to that date.

Will we receive back pay for strike days?

Only if the Bargaining Team and the City agree to retroactive pay, a bonus payment, or another form of compensation as part of negotiations. It is not common for employers to cover wages lost during a strike.

Does PROTEC17 have a strike fund?

Yes. The strike fund supports strike-related costs such as signs, supplies, food, logistics, and legal costs. It does not replace members' lost wages. Members interested in fundraising or mutual aid should contact the Contract Action Team.



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Who should I contact if I still have questions?

You may reach out to any of these PROTEC17 staff:

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