

In Wake of Recent Manpower Loss, FreshDirect Workers Vote ‘No Union’

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The low-wage warehouse workers at FreshDirect, the online grocery delivery service, voted overwhelmingly against union representation this weekend, according to the company and the two unions vying to represent the workers.

The vote was held about two weeks after the company suspended and lost scores of employees who could not provide accurate records of their residency status. Most of them were Hispanic and many of them were among FreshDirect’s most experienced workers.

The [National Labor Relations Board](#) conducted the vote, by secret ballot, on Saturday and Sunday.

Workers at the plant, on Borden Avenue in Long Island City, Queens, could vote for Local 348 of the United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 805 of the [Teamsters](#) or “no union.”

According to the company, about 80 percent of the 530 employees who participated voted “no union.”

Evan Theis, a spokesman for the Teamsters, said that FreshDirect usually had more than 900 warehouse workers. But many left in advance of a check by federal officials of employees’ [immigration](#) status.

“I think even though the results of the election turned out the way that they did, FreshDirect has now put itself in a very large, very deep public relations hole,” Mr. Theis said.

Citing the imminent federal audit, the company sent out a memo this month asking that workers update their files with the appropriate documents, like Social Security cards. From 100 to 300 of the warehouse workers then left their posts or were suspended.

Last week, the company, which serves mostly affluent New Yorkers, held a job fair. It offered \$7.85 an hour for jobs packing groceries at night, in near-freezing temperatures.

The past weekend's vote brings to a close a contentious battle between the company and the two competing unions. Both unions said the threat of a federal check was a scare tactic to keep the unions out of FreshDirect.

Jose Merced, an organizer for the food workers' local, said Sunday that FreshDirect had sought "to create an atmosphere of fear and terror."

He said the union would resume organizing efforts at FreshDirect next year.

Mr. Theis, speaking for the Teamsters local, said, "The best thing the company can do to restore the trust on their own is offer the workers a better standard of living, while not retaliating against those workers who have called them to account in the past."

Although the warehouse workers decided against a union, Jim Moore, the company's senior vice president for business affairs, said in a statement released on Sunday that FreshDirect's approximately 500 deliverymen have been in a union since last year and are working under a collective bargaining agreement.