

Local DHL center faces federal labor complaint

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The international delivery company DHL violated labor laws by trying to hamper a union organizing campaign at its new Upper Macungie distribution center, an attorney with the National Labor Relations Board alleged today.

DHL engaged in illegal surveillance of the union campaign by stationing security guards and supervisors in an area outside the plant when employees and union organizers were distributing union newsletters in April and May, said Scott C. Thompson, deputy regional attorney with the labor board's Philadelphia office.

DHL also told union organizers to stop passing out literature in April and called police to the plant when they ignored the demand, Thompson said. Police arrived but did not take any action, he said.

DHL reassigned an employee from a job of taping damaged boxes to the more physically demanding job of loading boxes into trucks as a result of his involvement with the union campaign, Thompson said. The reassignment came within a few days of the employee's involvement in distributing union literature, he said.

And a DHL supervisor interrogated an employee about the employee's feelings about the union campaign, Thompson said.

"It was a violation of the law to have threatened to call the police, to have called them and to engage in surveillance of the activity of handing out fliers by having security guards who are normally away from that area stationed by the employees passing out fliers," Thompson said. "The law says it is intimidating for an employer to have security guards stand and watch employees engage in legal activities. To have someone stand there and watch them pass them out is intimidating."

The labor board will pursue an official complaint against the Florida-based company if it does not agree to a settlement by Wednesday,

Thompson said. If the labor board files an official complaint, it prompts a hearing before a labor board judge at which DHL would have an opportunity to defend itself.

"We have asked the employer to let us know by Aug. 29 whether they'll agree to a

settlement or whether we'll issue a complaint and litigate the case," Thompson said. "The question here is whether we're going to issue a complaint."

The labor board investigated a complaint from the American Postal Workers Union, which is trying to organize workers at the Nestle Way plant that employs about 400 people. A vote to determine whether a majority of the workers want to form a union is scheduled for Sept. 12 and 13. The plant opened in February.

Reporting by Spencer Soper, The Morning Call