

Nurses planning a 5-day walkout next week

By Mark Petix Staff Writer

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POMONA - Nurses at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center will begin a five-day strike next week to protest stalled negotiations over such issues as health-care benefits and job security.

The union, representing 1,000 nurses at Pomona Valley, notified hospital officials of the strike, which is scheduled to begin 7 a.m. Sept. 26 and end at 6:59 a.m. Oct. 1.

Negotiations between the hospital and Service Employees International Union, Local 121RN began in April.

In August, the hospital made an offer union officials said members would not ratify, leading to a one-day strike Sept. 6.

In addition to health benefits and job security, contract negotiations have stumbled over staffing ratios for some hospital units.

Union leaders say meeting state nurse-to-patient ratios is not enough, while hospital spokeswoman Kathy Roche said staffing is adjusted based on the needs of patients.

The hospital recently offered nurses a 5 percent wage increase the first year of the contract and a 4 percent wage hike in years two and three.

The union's executive director, Sue Weinstein, said the offer also included a proposal for pay based on years of experience. The union rejected the offer.

The hospital said it is prepared to contract nurses from registries to temporarily replace striking nurses.

"We are hopeful we can come to a satisfactory resolution, but, at the same time, we are preparing for the possibility of a five-day strike," hospital president Richard E. Yochum said in a statement.

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