

# Sharp nurses must wait until Thursday for contract details

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Sharp HealthCare union nurses will have to wait until Thursday to learn details of a proposed labor agreement reached over the weekend by the nurses union and hospital system negotiators.

Sharp and United Nurses Association of California/Union of Health Care Professionals declared a public blackout on terms of the new three-year contract after reaching a deal Saturday night and averting a three-day strike set to start yesterday.

Union spokeswoman Laureen Lazarovici said yesterday that the blackout also applies to the union's 1,700 members.

Union leaders will spell out the pact's details to nurses Thursday, just before a vote on whether to ratify the contract that would cover all of Sharp's 3,400 staff nurses. Voting will take place at Four Points by Sheraton San Diego hotel on Aero Drive, near Sharp Memorial Hospital.

Before reaching a deal, the two sides had disagreed on staffing levels, the handling of quality-of-care complaints, health insurance coverage for retirees younger than 65 and whether all Sharp nurses should be required to join the union. Sharp managers had agreed to pay raises.

Lazarovici said the information blackout is no different from what union leaders did three years ago when Sharp nurses last voted on a contract.

Ken Jacobs, chairman of UC Berkeley's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, said that while it is common for unions and companies to limit what they say publicly about a labor agreement until after ratification, it is unusual for union members to be kept in the dark.

"It's important for people to know what they're voting on," Jacobs said.