

## Sutter nurses issue strike notification

**Union to walk off job for 2 days next month**

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Sutter Solano's registered nurses issued a strike notification Friday, and absent a major breakthrough, will walk off the job next month, a nurses union spokesman said Friday.

Hospital officials received word just before noon Friday, said its director of nursing, Kim Trumbull.

"We're disappointed. We really value our nurses and see them as the backbone of the organization," Trumbull said. "But we're fully prepared to bring in replacement nurses. We have plans in place to prevent disruption in patient care."



Jan Rodolfo, Oncology nurse at Alta Bates Summit, is one of many that spoke at a morning press conference Friday announcing plans for a major nurses strike. (Laura A. Oda/MediaNews Group)

Sutter Solano Medical Center's nearly 200 unionized nurses, who have been negotiating their contract since May, authorized a strike in August. Their contract expired

July 3. The strike notice calls for a two-day work stoppage Oct. 10-11, Trumbull said.

Union officials cite ongoing problems with break relief, substandard equipment, and inconstant implementation of the state-mandated nurse-to-patient ratio. They're also calling for a no-lift

policy to avoid nurse injuries and say the health insurance and retirement plans Sutter Solano is offering is inadequate.

"We have common problems throughout the Sutter system that Sutter isn't addressing," said California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee spokesman Chuck Idelson. "Sutter seems intent on forcing a conflict with its RNs, which is tragic for the communities they serve."

The union held a press conference in Oakland on Friday, where RNs from several Sutter hospitals discussed the possible walkout and their concerns. The union represents 5,000 registered nurses in 14 Northern California Sutter hospitals, 10 of which are in contract negotiations. All of those institutions reportedly received strike notices Friday.

Sutter RNs are also protesting the corporation's plans to reduce patient services in San Francisco, San Leandro and Santa Rosa, according to a union statement.

A strike could involve up to 5,500 RNs at several Northern California Sutter Health facilities including Vallejo's and the Fremont-Rideout Health Group in Yuba City and Marysville. A walk-out could also involve Children's Hospital Oakland RNs and some 300 other medical professionals at various Sutter facilities who are members of the CNA/NNOC-affiliated Caregivers and Healthcare Employees Union, the statement said.

Nurses union officials accuse Sutter of being more concerned about profits than patients.

"It's notable that the same patient care issues and concerns are seen at all Sutter hospitals, which appears to reflect the corporate influence of the importance of the bottom line at the sacrifice of patient care," Genel Morgan, a Mills-Peninsula Health Services RN and CNA/NNOC nurse negotiating team member said in the statement.

But Sutter Solano officials remain hopeful a strike can be avoided.

"We presented our last, best and final offer (Friday), because the union hasn't been responding to our offers to meet," Trumbull said. "We're hoping the nurses will encourage their union representatives to vote for it."

A strike by Sutter Solano nurses was narrowly averted in August 2005, but nurses there struck for 10 days about a decade ago, Idelson said.

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