Questions members are asking about a possible SPEEA strike

Are we going on strike?
A strike is only used when absolutely necessary. The teams are focused on reaching agreement and avoiding a strike. Boeing is holding firm on increasing employee health-care costs, lowering wage pools, reducing retirement income for future hires, and decreasing the rate of pension growth for current hires while increasing pension risk. SPEEA is preparing for a strike in case members decide it is the only avenue left to secure an acceptable contract.

What does it take to call a strike?
If the negotiating teams request strike authorization, the Bargaining Unit Councils (BUC) – Council Reps in the Prof and Tech units – vote whether to approve sending a vote to members asking for strike authorization. A simple majority (50% + 1 vote) of members in each unit gives that unit’s negotiation team authority to call a strike.

What happens if only one unit – the Prof or the Tech unit – votes for strike authorization?
If only one unit votes to grant strike authorization, then only that unit’s negotiation team has the authority to call a strike.

Does approving strike authorization mean we go on strike?
Not necessarily. If a majority of members vote to grant strike authorization, then the negotiation teams have the “authority” to call a strike. It does not mean a strike is imminent. A strong strike authorization vote may provide the teams enough leverage to compel negotiation of an acceptable agreement without having to actually call a strike.

What happens if I am on an approved leave when a strike is called (sick, maternity or other approved leave)?
If an employee is on approved leave, for example maternity leave, when the strike begins, the employer should NOT notify the employer that they are honoring the strike until after the leave period ends.

Can the company lay me off while I am on strike?
The employer can lay you off during a strike if the layoff is for a legitimate reason and is not a form of retaliation for striking.

Can I work for another company while I am on strike?
Yes, however the normal conflict-of-interest rules apply. Striking union members often take temporary jobs to help meet expenses during strikes.

What happens if I’m on travel for Boeing (domestic or overseas) when a strike is called?
If you are on a travel assignment, whether a domestic location or overseas, you can stop working just like you are at your regular workplace. If you stop working, there is a risk that Boeing may cancel plane tickets or stop paying expenses while on travel. During the last strike, employees were provided the opportunity to return home at the company’s expense. Please contact mailto:carrieb@speea.org if you are on a travel assignment for additional information.

Can the employer replace striking workers?
An employer can temporarily replace striking workers during a strike. In the event of an unfair labor practice strike, the employer cannot permanently replace employees. In the event of an economic strike, the employer can permanently replace employees. SPEEA currently has several Unfair Labor Practice charges against Boeing before the National Labor Relations Board. The SPEEA strike in 2000 was an Unfair Labor Practice strike.

Can I work from home during a strike?
Working from home is not striking. Striking workers do no work for the company.

What about picket duty during the strike?
Participation in picket duty is an important part of a successful strike. During a strike, each member is requested to provide at least 16 hours of picket duty, for example – four shifts of four hours each. More information will follow about the specifics.

How does a strike end?
A strike ends when the negotiating teams negotiate an agreement with the company and that agreement is approved by a vote of the members.

Agreements reached to end strikes contain a strike settlement agreement that identifies how issues that occurred during the strike are settled. This includes items like members’ medical and dental coverage, life insurance coverage, pension benefit accruals and other items.

What if the strike ends and I’m out of town?
Once a tentative agreement is reached, a member vote and general return to work can occur within a few days. The strike settlement in 2000 allowed 10 days for employees to return to work from the date of the tentative agreement.

Supporting negotiations

How can I support the negotiating team and help prevent a strike?
Participating in SPEEA activities in the workplace shows you are one of the thousands of members unwilling to accept a contract that has less value than our current contracts. Boeing corporate currently believes SPEEA members will accept a takeaway contract. Until they believe otherwise, they are unlikely to change their position in negotiations.

Are workplace actions planned?
A SPEEA Day of Action is planned for Wednesday, Jan. 9, the day negotiations resume with Boeing. Taking part in activities this day can go a long way toward preventing a strike. Ask your Council Rep, Area Rep or check the SPEEA website for activities at your site.

Also, until a contract agreement is reached, members are encouraged to continue Work-to-Rule efforts, wear red shirts every Wednesday, display desk tents, write letters, or take part in the 10/2 clap.

How can I stay informed about negotiations?
Stay informed by watching for email updates – at work and by signing up for SPEEA home email from the SPEEA website. Talk to your Council and Area Reps. Sign up for text messages (text “SPEEA” to 40644), “like” SPEEA on Facebook and visit the website regularly for updates at www.speea.org.
Boeing benefits and program participation

Update your information in Total Access

Take a minute to look at your contact information in Boeing Total Access. Important mail from Boeing is sent to the address listed in Total Access.

Will I lose dental/medical coverage if I strike?

If Boeing cancels your coverage during the strike, “active” employee coverage should end on the last day of the month in which you go on strike. As a COBRA “qualifying event,” striking workers and dependents may continue medical coverage through COBRA for up to 18 months by paying the required premiums. If you obtain new dependents while on COBRA, you will have the same opportunity to add them just as you did when you were an active employee.

After a COBRA-qualifying event, the company notifies you of your COBRA rights by mail. You should carefully read any information you receive about COBRA. Each individual has 60 days from the qualifying event to elect COBRA medical and/or dental. If elected, then COBRA continuation coverage and premiums are retroactive to the date of lost coverage. The COBRA medical rate is approximately $500 a month per individual ($500 for you, $500 for each dependent). The COBRA dental rate is approximately $50 a month for each individual. The precise COBRA rates vary based on the plan you have chosen and may be obtained by calling Total Access. Because of the 60-day opportunity to elect, most individuals will delay enrolling in COBRA until they have incurred more in the plan’s reimbursable costs than the respective retroactive COBRA premiums.

For more information, you may examine your federal rights to COBRA at the Department of Labor (DOL) website: http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/faqs/faq-consumer-cobra.html.

Part of the strike settlement agreement negotiated to end the strike of 2000 provided that all health care benefits would apply retroactively as if the strike never occurred.

What about other benefits, such as life insurance?

If Boeing cancels your life insurance, they will notify you of your conversion rights. Conversion life insurance is very expensive, and you have a limited amount of time to convert your coverage. You should carefully read any information you receive regarding life insurance conversion.

What happens to my medical coverage if I am on approved medical leave and a strike is called?

Do NOT inform Boeing you are participating in the strike. So long as you remain on an approved medical leave of absence, coverage for you and your dependents should continue for six months. After six months, coverage for your dependents will cease, triggering a COBRA-qualifying event as described above. Coverage for you should convert to COBRA and continue for an additional 24 months. While on an approved medical leave, you are required to pay the same premiums you were paying as an active employee.

Is my retirement benefit affected if I strike?

Unless covered by a strike settlement agreement, individuals who go on strike will not receive vesting or credited service (hours of service) during the strike.

The previous strike settlement agreement contained provisions to reinstate service hours retroactively for all employees that honored the strike.

Am I still covered by short term/long term disability if I strike?

If you are on an approved medical leave of absence the day before you go on strike, your disability benefits continue up to the plan limits or until you recover. You will not be covered for any new disabilities that develop after going out on strike.

I am attending a Learning Together Program (LTP) class. What will happen to my tuition payment if we go on strike?

During the last strike, employees who enrolled and started prior to the first day participating in the strike were fully reimbursed. (This assumes you pass with a C- or better and submit that grade within the designated timeframe.) Striking employees who had enrolled but not started prior to the first day of participating in the strike were not reimbursed.

Financial questions

Does SPEEA have a strike fund?

No, SPEEA does not have a strike fund. During the strike of 2000, members found many ways to limit expenses, work with creditors and borrow from low-cost sources to carry them through the economic shortfall caused by the strike. In addition, striking workers are sometimes able to find temporary jobs to meet financial needs.

Can SPEEA offer any support if I am facing a financial crisis?

The SPEEA Care Fund was established during the strike of 2000 to help members facing immediate financial needs. Members informed SPEEA of the need and if the need met certain requirements, a check was issued to help the member continue participating in the strike. SPEEA Care still exists and remains a source of emergency funding. The SPEEA offices have additional information.

Can I use accrued paid leave time to continue to get a paycheck after a strike starts?

A striking employee is not able to use accrued leave during a strike.

What can I do now to financially prepare for the possibility of a strike?

January is a three paycheck month. Plan now to save one check If you have loans such as a mortgage, student loan, car loan or other loan debt, contact the lending institution and let them know that you may be involved in a strike (duration unknown). Ask them what options are available to delay payment. Some lenders will allow striking employees to make interest-only payments. Other lenders sometimes allow you to ‘skip’ a payment and then add a payment onto the end of the loan. If you expect an income tax refund, file your income tax as soon as possible.

Can I take a loan from my VIP account to help cover expenses during the strike?

Subject to the loan provisions of the Voluntary Investment Plan (VIP), you may take a loan from your 401(k). Loans are available to active employees of the Boeing Controlled Group and employees on a company-approved leave of absence only, so if you need a 401(k) loan, you should take a loan out before the strike occurs. You may borrow from $1,000 up to the lesser of 50% of your account balance (minus any current outstanding loan balances), or $50,000 minus your highest outstanding loan balance(s), including defaulted loans.

You may have no more than two loans outstanding across all savings plans maintained by the Boeing Controlled Group at any time. Before the strike, you may examine your availability to make a loan from your 401(k) online through Total Access. Alternatively, you may call Total Access at 1-866-473-2016.

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