

Workers say Tesla fires employees for union efforts

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New York, February 18 (RHC)-- Several employees at a United States Tesla factory in Buffalo, New York were fired a day after launching union-organizing efforts, according to the local labor group Tesla Workers United (TWU).

The workers received an e-mail this week updating them on a new policy that prohibits them from recording workplace meetings without all participants' permission, the group said in a release Thursday. It

said such restrictions violate federal labor law and flout New York's one-party consent law to record conversations.

"We're angry. This won't slow us down. This won't stop us," Sara Costantino, a Tesla employee and organising committee member, said in a prepared statement. "They want us to be scared, but I think they just started a stampede. We can do this. But I believe we will do this."

The Tesla plant, which makes solar panels and other renewable energy technology, is not far from the Starbucks Corp office where workers voted to unionise last year. TWU said the firings were unacceptable and that the expectations placed on Tesla workers were "unfair, unattainable, ambiguous and ever changing".

"I feel blindsided, I got COVID and was out of the office, then I had to take a bereavement leave. I returned to work, was told I was exceeding expectations and then Wednesday came along," organising committee member Arian Berek, who is one of the fired employees, said in a statement. "I strongly feel this is in retaliation to the committee announcement, and it's shameful."

The Rochester Regional Joint Board of Workers United has filed a complaint against Tesla with the National Labor Relations Board, accusing the electric vehicle maker of unfair labour practices.

In the complaint, the group lists the names of several of the fired employees who were part of the factory's autopilot department. The group said it believes Tesla "terminated these individuals in retaliation for union activity and to discourage union activity". It is asking the federal regulator for injunctive relief "to prevent irreparable destruction of employee rights resulting from Tesla's unlawful conduct."

On Thursday, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, without specifically referring to the situation at the Tesla Buffalo plant that, "the president supports fundamental rights for workers under the National Labor Relations Act, including the right to organise free from intimidation or coercion".

As part of union organising efforts, the Tesla Workers United organising committee said in a letter to management Tuesday that the Buffalo employees are seeking a voice on the job and want to "build an even more collaborative environment that will strengthen the company."

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