

Industrial Relations

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Strike

Strike means withdrawal of labour. Strike is regarded as a weapon in the hands of workers used in case of industrial disputes as an industrial action. Strike has been defined under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 as:

“Strike means a cessation of work by a body of persons employed in any industry acting in combination, or a concerted refusal, or a refusal under a common understanding of any number of persons who are or continue to work or to accept employment”. There should be five elements in strike namely: (a) cessation of work, (b) by a body of persons, (c) under a common understanding, (d) a concerted refusal, and due to (e) some conflict between the parties.

Strikes may be various types like:

(a) Authorized strike, (b) Unauthorized strike, (c) Legal Strike, (d) Illegal Strike, (e) Pen down strike, (f) Sit down strike, (g) Tool down strike, (h) Quickie strike, (i) Lightning strike, (j) General strike, (k) Particular strike, (l) White collar strike, (m) Blue collar strike, (n) Stay-in strike, (o) Token strike, (p) Sympathetic strike, (q) Indefinite strike, have been so employed to (r) Mass casual leave strike, (s) Sick-out strike, (t) Wild cat strike, (u) Sectional strike, (v) Hunger strike, and (w) Flash strike.

When the decision to go on strike is approved by the general body of the union, then it is called authorized strike. If it is declared without obtaining the approval of the general body, it is called unauthorized strike.

In every industrialized country, there is some legal framework which prescribes the conditions which have to be followed in case of strike. If a strike is done following those legal

conditions prescribed for it, it is called legal strike and when it is done in contravention of these provisions, it becomes illegal strike.

Pen-down strike is done by the office or supervisory workers. If they remain on their job, but put down their pens and refuse to work, then it is called pen-down strike. It is mostly of a short duration or brief in nature.

Sit-down strike, literally means sitting down on the place of work and refusal to work. This is done by rank and file workers.

Tool-down strike is also of the similar nature. In this type of strike, workers put down their tools and refuse to work. This is done by production workers.

Quickie strike means those strikes which are suddenly done by workers without any prior notice or preparation. Some incidents might lead to quickie strike.

The general meaning of lightning is 'the electric flash in the sky usually followed by thunder'. Lightning strike in industry also carries the same meaning. Lightning strike is quickly called-off like lightning in the sky. It is without any authorization from the union or without preparation. It normally takes place as a result of some sudden incident. It is also defined as: (a) a strike by workers after little or no warning, especially without official union backing; (b) a strike declared at a very short notice.

General strikes and particular strikes refer to the scope or coverage of the strike. If the strike is done in only one undertaking, then it is called particular strike. If many plants located in a city are covered, then it is called general strike.

If strike is resorted to by educated workers or office workers like clerks, stenographers, nurses, teachers, telephone operators etc., then it is called white collar strikes. On the other hand, if it is done by blue collar employees like coal miners, truckers, drivers, machine operators etc., then it is blue collar workers' strike.

Stay-in strikes are a typical type of strike. In this type of strike, workers stop working but stay at the place of their work so that somebody else (strike breakers) do not take their position. The main intention is not to allow anyone to keep the work going.

Token strike works as a signal or a trailer. When workers resort to a strike which is of a brief duration like 'two hours strike' or 'one day strike', then it is called token strike. The main purpose of a token strike is to give an alarm to management that the water is boiling. Workers may resort to a longer strike, if their demands are not considered. Token strike is quite common in India but it is mostly done for a day.

As the name indicates itself, sympathetic strike is done by workers in sympathy with their fellow workers in other organization. If workers in a plant go on strike in sympathy of workers who are already on strike in a neighboring plant, then it is called sympathetic strike. In this case the striking workers do not have any complain against their own employer, they strike because they have sympathy for the other workers or fellow brethren.

Strikes may be of specified duration or unspecified duration. It may be done for a day or two, then it is specified strike. If it is done for an indefinite period, till the employer accepts demands, then it is called indefinite strike.

Mass casual leave strike, is not exactly a type of strike because workers are on casual leave but since, it is taken by all the workers at one time in a concerted manner and under a common understanding, it is considered as strike. Mass casual leave is normally seen as an industrial action only in Indian sub-continent.

In sick-out strike, majority of workers fall sick on the same day or pretend to be sick by taking sick leave. Since they are on leave, they do not break any rules. Management cannot take any action against them. Sudden absence of many employees paralyses the functioning of the organization and causes loss to the employer just like a strike.

Quickie strikes are also called as wild cat strikes. Like a wild cat, they soon appear and disappear soon. Wild cat strikes are suddenly done and soon called off. They are a type of protest which workers want to show in order to disapprove some action of the management, or incidents in the organization.

The term sectional strike has also been used by some of the experts of industrial relations. According to them, if the strike is confined only to one or two sections of the undertaking, then that type of strike is called as sectional strike. Whenever a sectional strike takes place, the other

departments of the undertaking keep working. The idea behind this type of strike is to draw the attention of the management towards a particular type of workers.

Hunger strike is done to gain sympathy from public and get noticed by employer. Workers may decide to forego food for a specified period. Such non-violent protests generally bring moral pressure on employers/governments.

Another type of strike called flash strike is mostly resorted to by highly skilled workers or technicians. They suddenly stop work without serving any strike notice. The lightening strike or the wild cat strike take place as a result of some unpleasant incident which suddenly occurs in the undertaking but in flash strike it is not the incident rather some unfulfilled demand of the workers for which they suddenly stop work. An example is the flash strike which the staff of the King Fisher Airlines resorted to on September 30, 2012 at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi (Times of India, 1.10.12, page 10, column-7)