

Raley's workers taking vote on whether to strike

Publisher's note: *The two South Lake Tahoe Raley's are part of Local 8. The strike vote is being taken June 3-4 at Embassy Suites.*

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Raley's, trying to head off a strike vote, is warning its union workers about more store closures and other consequences if they walk out.

With members of the United Food and Commercial Workers about to vote to authorize the first strike against Raley's, company Chief Executive Michael Teel said the grocery chain plans to hire replacement workers to keep stores open if a work stoppage occurs.

Even with replacements, Raley's expects to close "select underperforming store locations" – and many of those would likely close for good – Teel said in a memo to workers.

Raley's has already announced four store shutdowns this year, saying it needs labor concessions to become more competitive with nonunion rivals such as Wal-Mart. In his letter to UFCW members, Teel said the West Sacramento chain is a "family-owned business that is fighting for survival in a struggling economy and competitive environment."

Members of UFCW Local 8, based in Roseville and covering much of the Central Valley, are scheduled to hold strike-authorization meetings starting today. It isn't known when results of the vote will be available.

The union said employees of Raley's Bel Air subsidiary won't vote because their contract doesn't expire until June 30. The

union's contracts with Raley's and Nob Hill employees expire Wednesday.

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