Cooper Tire Locks Out Union Workers

The Associated Press

FINDLAY, Ohio (AP) — Cooper Tire & Rubber Co. said Monday that it locked union workers out of a Findlay, Ohio, plant after talks on a new contract failed.

The company plans to operate with temporary workers but said it might need to make some "production adjustments."

Cooper has been negotiating for three months with the United Steelworkers. The union's members voted down a tentative three-year agreement last week by a 2-to-1 margin. Terms of that offer were not disclosed.

The company said it told the union that it needed a "competitive, cost-effective and timely agreement" to avoid simultaneous work stoppages in Findlay and Texarkana, Ark. Workers there took a strike vote ahead of negotiations that begin this week, according to a union spokesman.

The company said it couldn't agree with the union on a new, long-term deal or a one-year extension of the contract that expired Oct. 31. The union would only accept a 30-day extension, said Cooper, which also said that dates for future bargaining were being finalized.

United Steelworkers spokesman Pat Gallagher said the union was "very disappointed in the company's actions with the lockout. The (Ohio workers) hadn't even taken a strike vote."

Gallagher said 1,050 workers at the Ohio plant accepted $30 million in concessions in the 2008 contract and want to regain some but not all of that in a new contract.

Cooper shares rose 64 cents, or 5.1 percent, to close at $13.17 amid a broad market rally, before the company announced the lockout.

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