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# Raytheon strikers to return to work today

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TUCSON - Union employees who were on strike for 10 weeks will return to work Monday at Raytheon Missile Systems in Tucson.

Raytheon, a defense contractor, is Southern Arizona's largest private employer with more than 11,000 employees. Its Tucson plant makes the Javelin anti-tank missile, the Tomahawk missile and air-to-air missiles.

About 1,900 members of the International Association of Machinists Local 933 went on strike in November, saying the company's proposed wage increases wouldn't be sufficient to cover increased health care premiums.

The machinists agreed to a new contract last week.

James McBrearty, professor of economics and industrial relations at the University of Arizona, wonders if the strike was worth it.

During the strike, the lowest-paid union members lost \$4,000 in wages. That excludes potential overtime pay.

"From an economic point of view, I'm not sure they're going to be able to make up 70 days worth of wages, especially when you count overtime," McBrearty said. "That's quite a bit of money."

The union members will be getting the rising health insurance costs and the same 3-percent pay raise each year for three years that were in Raytheon's initial offer in November.

They will, however, get a \$1,000 bonus. The company also agreed to cap rate increases for most insurance plans and to negotiate future increases.

Bobby Martinez, the union's directing business representative, said the union's major victories were respect and the right to negotiate rising insurance rates.

"Our members have felt as if Raytheon never took them seriously and therefore offered them substandard contracts," he said.

Now, Martinez said the company will take union proposals more seriously.

But McBrearty predicts the rising cost of health care will be an ongoing issue between Raytheon and the machinists. The employer must cut costs to stay competitive and the union members find it hard to let go of free or cheap health care.

"I see this as a real battlefield for the foreseeable future," he said.

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On the Net:

Raytheon Missile Systems: <http://www.raytheon.com/businesses/rms/index.html>

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