

## Waste Management Operations to Face Crippling Impact as Union Representing 87 Employees Announces Strike

The strike could significantly disrupt operations, affecting nearly half of the agency's workforce. Union leaders demand wage increases and better working conditions, highlighting the ongoing struggle for fair compensation

Government / **Published On July 06, 2024 06:44 AM /**

Janeke Simon **July 06, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



After persistent [reports of worker unrest](#) which were [downplayed](#) by Waste Management Authority officials, the union representing the disgruntled employees has announced impending strike action.

A July 3 announcement from the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) indicates that members of IAM's local chapter have "overwhelmingly voted in favor of authorizing a strike at V.I. Waste Management Authority." The strike, IAM says, comes as a "direct response to stalled negotiations and unsatisfactory contract proposals that have persisted since the last contract expired in 2019 with no raises and no back pay."?

IAM had last year complained about stalled negotiations due to the Office of Collective Bargaining's [chronic staffing shortage](#), which has reportedly caused [huge case backlogs](#) when it came to labor disputes. In September 2023, IAM Southern Territory Special Representative John Vigueras said that union members were [ready to participate in job action](#) if contract negotiations remained stalled.?

With Wednesday's announcement, it appears that negotiations have not made much progress. "After careful consideration and with a unified voice, our members have decided that the offer on the table from V.I. Waste Management Authority is not acceptable," said IAM Southern Territory General Vice President Craig Martin. "Our members receive wholehearted support from the IAM and our labor allies on the island, all of whom are prepared to mobilize if a contract fails to address our members' priorities," he continued.

According to Mr. Vigueras, the offer from Waste Management "falls short of addressing the critical issue of wage increases across the board ... Our members should not have to take on second and third jobs to support their families."

During last week's appearance before the Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance, outgoing WMA Executive Director Roger Merritt claimed that less than 5% of the agency's staff were involved in the unexplained absences reported by the Consortium as a sickout - a percentage that worked out to 9 or fewer of the WMA's 180 employees off the job. However, with the IAM representing 87 Waste Management staffers, the impact of a strike will be much greater. The loss of almost half of the agency's workers due to strike action could potentially cripple WMA operations for as long as the withdrawal of labor lasts.

WMA employees are categorized as Class II employees, who must provide 72 hours notice of a strike. While a date for the commencement of the job action has yet to be decided by membership, the 3-day notification requirement will have been satisfied by the start of next week.

In defense of the decision to strike, Mr. Vigueras underscored the need for fair working conditions and compensation within any organization. "Workers' welfare is not just a perk; it's a necessity for operational success, and it's high time the government and management recognize that fact," he declared.