

Woolies says impact of Saccawu strike is minimal

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It was business as usual at South African retailer Woolworths during the first day of the nationwide strike across all its operations.

"All stores are open and the impact of the strike has been minimal," said Zyda Rylands, Woolies COO Support Services.

Rylands added that contingency measures that included training of temporary staff had helped make up for absent workers.

Thousands of workers led by the South African Catering, Commercial and Allied Workers' Union (Saccawu) launched a nationwide strike on Wednesday in a concerted effort to get Woolies to grant it recognition in dealing with workers' issues.

It is unclear how many workers heeded Saccawu's call to down tools, with both parties saying they were still gathering reports from different branches.

But in a march in Johannesburg, between 1,200 and 1,500 workers took to the street, according to Saccawu's spokesperson Lucas Ramatlhodi.

Ramatlhodi said further details about the strike which is scheduled to run until Monday will be released later in the day.

"We have no final numbers yet," said Rylands, when asked about the number of workers that did not show up for work this morning, adding that it was because "they worked in shifts".

Ramatlhodi said the strike would be intensified to include consumer boycotts if the union's demands were not met. The strike is the culmination of protest actions which included the withdrawal of labour over the past few weeks over the same issue in Johannesburg on 21 August, Durban on 29 August and most recently in Cape Town last Friday.

Saccawu said more than 60% of Woolies' workforce in big stores heeded the call to down tools in all three industrial actions.

Rylands, who has been unable to give the exact number of workers that stayed off work in all three actions, said the effect was minimal and that all stores had remained opened.

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