

The New Standard

Would-be Wal-Mart Union Organizer Fasts to Protest Firing

Mar 14 - A Wal-Mart worker who said the company fired him Tuesday for trying to start a union, is now on a hunger strike. Ryszard Tomtas, a Polish immigrant, was fired from a Loveland, Colorado Wal-Mart Distribution Center.

Tomtas, 46, told ABC News that he was fired because he signed a union card and the union told Wal-Mart Tomtas would begin organizing the store. Wal-Mart denied these allegations, and said they fired Tomtas because of "horseplay."

Tomtas, who was involved in Poland's Solidarity movement to overthrow a Soviet-style dictatorship in the 1980s, chained himself to a stop sign in front of Wal-Mart on Thursday. Police asked him to leave to avoid arrest, but said he could continue protesting in front of the building provided he does not block traffic.

Tomtas told ABC News he will drink only water during his hunger strike, and that he is in the process of filing a wrongful termination complaint with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

An attorney for United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7 told ABC News that the union plans to file charges.

--Madeleine Baran