

Twitter says layoffs to begin Friday

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Elon Musk is moving aggressively to overhaul Twitter after his blockbuster \$44 bln takeover of the messaging platform.

Twitter said it will start laying off employees on Friday, according to a memo sent to staff, with several workers filing a lawsuit alleging the move by new owner billionaire Elon Musk violates US labor law.

A company-wide email seen by AFP says Twitter employees will receive word via email at the start of business Friday, California time, as to what their fate is.

It does not give a number but the Washington Post and New York Times reported that about half of Twitter's 7,500 employees will be let go.

"In an effort to place Twitter on a healthy path, we will go through the difficult process of reducing our global work force," the email said.

Twitter employees have been bracing for this kind of bad news since Musk completed his mammoth \$44 billion acquisition late last week and quickly set about dissolving its board and firing its chief executive and top managers.

Late on Thursday, a group of five Twitter employees who had already been fired filed a class action complaint against the company on the grounds that they had not been given the required 60-day notice period as required under US federal and California state law, according to the text of the complaint.

The lawsuit references the US Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, which provides workers a right to advance notice in cases of mass layoffs or plant closings.

The lawsuit also asks the court to restrict Twitter from asking employees to sign documents that would waive their rights under the WARN Act.

Workplace review process

A workplace and employee review and other projects ordered by Musk were reportedly so exhaustive and grueling that some engineers slept at Twitter headquarters over the weekend.

The email sent Thursday told workers to go home and not report for work on Friday.

"Our offices will be temporarily closed and all badge access will be suspended," the email said. Those on the way to the office should turn around and return home."

The email acknowledged that Twitter is going through "an incredibly challenging experience."

"We recognize that this will impact a number of individuals who have made valuable contributions to Twitter, but this action is unfortunately necessary to ensure the company's success moving forward," it added.

Some employees, however, were scathing in their criticism of the process.

"The current layoff process is a farce and a disgrace. Tesla's henchmen are making decisions about people they know nothing about except the number of lines of code produced. This is completely absurd," Taylor Leese, the manager of an engineering team who said he was fired, tweeted Sunday.

Many engineers had to print the last lines of code they had produced, according to an employee who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Lists comparing computer scientists with each other, mainly on the basis of production volume, were also drawn up, according to another employee.

Financial trouble

Saddled with the purchase of Twitter, for which Musk has said he

overpaid, the tycoon is looking for ways for Twitter to make money—and fast.

His most recent idea was to charge \$8 a month to anyone on Twitter who would receive a blue "verified" badge assuring the public that the account is authentic.

A news report this week said Musk wanted to charge \$20 a month but faced a backlash, including from bestselling novelist Stephen King, who tweeted: "\$20 a month to keep my blue check?" It was followed by an expletive.

Musk responded on Twitter, seemingly bargaining with King: "we need to pay the bills somehow! Twitter cannot rely entirely on advertisers. How about \$8?"

Musk has said he wants to increase Twitter's revenue from \$5 billion last year to more than \$26 billion in 2028.

Top global companies, including General Mills and Volkswagen, suspended their advertising on Twitter on Thursday as pressure builds on Musk to turn his platform into a successful business.

US auto giant General Motors last week was the first major advertiser to suspend advertising following the takeover.

Officials and civil rights groups have expressed worry that Musk will open the site to uncontrolled hate speech and misinformation as well as reinstate banned accounts, including that of former US president Donald Trump.

Advertisers are Twitter's main source of revenue and Musk has tried to calm the nerves by reassuring that the site would not become a "free-for-

all hellscape".

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