

Google updates misconduct reporting amid employee discontent

April 25 2019, by Rachel Lerman



In this Nov. 1, 2018, file photo, workers protest against Google's handling of sexual misconduct allegations at the company's Mountain View, Calif., headquarters. Google says it has updated the way it investigates misconduct claims, changes it pledged to make after thousands of employees walked out in protest last November. The company says the changes make it simpler for employees to file complaints about sexual misconduct or other harassment. The move follows claims by two walkout organizers that they faced Google retaliation for helping to put together the protest. (AP Photo/Noah Berger, File)

Google said Thursday it has updated the way it investigates misconduct claims—changes the company pledged to make after employees called for action last year.

The company is simultaneously facing backlash from two employees who say they faced corporate retaliation after helping to organizing the November walkout protests .

Thursday's changes are designed to make it simpler for employees to file complaints about sexual misconduct or other issues. Google also issued guidelines to tell employees what to expect during an investigation, and added a policy that allows workers to bring along a colleague for support during the reporting process.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai promised to make these changes last fall after thousands of Google employees at company offices around the world briefly walked out to protest the company's handling of sexual misconduct investigations and payouts to executives facing misconduct allegations.

Google has already responded to some protester demands by ending mandatory arbitration and changing benefit rules for some temporary workers and contractors.

But organizers of the walkout say there is more to be done. Two organizers sent an internal email to some Google employees this week saying they had been retaliated against by the company after helping to put together the protests.



This Nov. 1, 2018, file photo shows a photo of the Google logo at their offices in Granary Square, London. Google says it has updated the way it investigates misconduct claims, changes it pledged to make after thousands of employees walked out in protest last November. The company says the changes make it simpler for employees to file complaints about sexual misconduct or other harassment. The move follows claims by two walkout organizers that they faced Google retaliation for helping to put together the protest. (AP Photo/Alastair Grant, File)

One employee said she was told to end her outside research work about artificial intelligence ethics. Another said she was effectively demoted before hiring a lawyer, when her work was then restored.

But she faces a "hostile" environment and considers quitting every day, she wrote in the email.

Google denied the retaliation claims, saying employees are regularly given new assignments as business needs change.

The walkout organizers are holding a virtual town hall Friday for Google employees to discuss retaliation claims.

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