

Kohl's fired 3 employees for violating store's policy

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Rikki Groves wasn't the only employee fired from the Kohl's department store in Mechanicsville and asked to pay restitution for reusing coupons and passing the savings on to customers.

Rebecca Hagen, 20, of Sandston and Katie Kombacher, 21, of Mechanicsville said they were also interrogated, photographed and asked to sign documents barring them from returning to the store or shopping there after they were told they misused coupons.

"I was pretty mad about the situation," Hagen said. Kombacher said her firing was "a big ordeal." She said store officials "made me walk through the store while I was crying."

All three women are looking for new jobs.

Earlier this week, The Times-Dispatch ran a story reporting what had happened to Groves.

Dozens of people responded. The newspaper received more than 50 e-mails and about 40 phone calls, complaining about the way Groves was treated. Hagen and Kombacher contacted The Times-Dispatch after the story ran.



would have to repay the store for discounts taken with the extra use of the coupons. Hagen said store officials "told me if I did not pay, I would have been arrested for embezzlement."

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Many readers who contacted The Times-Dispatch said they planned to call the store's corporate office to say they would never shop at a Kohl's again. Others said they cut up their Kohl's credit cards.

A few questioned why the newspaper ran the story, calling the incident minor.

When they were dismissed from the store, all three women were told they

Groves said she was told she owed the store \$1,000. The evening before the first story went to press, Lori Sansoucie, a spokeswoman at Kohl's headquarters in Menomonee Falls, Wis., said that while Groves violated company policy, the store would not require her to pay back the \$1,000.

At that time, Groves had already paid the store \$100 and was scheduled to pay \$150 each month for the next six months.

She has since received a \$100 check in the mail from the store.

Hagen, who had been asked to pay \$214, and Kombacher, who had been asked to pay \$600, said they have also gotten their money back.

Sansoucie yesterday confirmed that three employees had been fired for the same "policy infringement," but she would not comment on the way the women said they were treated.

Groves, Hagen and Kombacher all said that they were originally told by a security employee there that they could be arrested if they did not pay the money back. However, a Henrico County police spokesman told The Times-Dispatch that to his knowledge the matter in question was not a crime and rather an internal store-policy matter.

The controversy stemmed from a recent "friends and family sale" at the store.

Groves said Kohl's employees received 15-percent-off coupons in the mail -- one for their use and 10 for family and friends.

All three former employees said they had extra coupons and in some cases were reusing them at their registers. They said they were not told what they were doing was wrong until it was too late.

"I don't think I was treated fairly," Kombacher said.

Looking back, Groves said that while she is glad she won't have to pay back the \$1,000, she's still angry at how Kohl's handled the issue.

"I never received an apology," Groves said. "But at least now I know for sure now that they were wrong."

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