

Layoff notification email template

Follow up a layoff conversation with dates, severance, benefits, and support, and meet WARN notice rules.

Updated October 15, 2026. Written and reviewed by the HRTally Research Team.

When to use this template

Layoffs are the hardest emails HR helps write. People affected should hear the news in a private conversation, ideally from their manager with HR present, before any company-wide message. This follow-up puts everything in writing: the separation date, pay through the notice period, severance terms, benefits, unemployment information, and the support available.

Be direct and human. Avoid euphemisms like workforce optimization. Say clearly that the decision is about the business, not the person's performance, if that's true. Then, separately, communicate with the employees who remain, because they will be anxious too. The organizational change announcement can help. Our workforce planning guide covers alternatives to layoffs.

Version 1: To affected employee

SUBJECT Important information about your employment

Hi [Employee first name],

This email follows our conversation today. As we discussed, your position is being eliminated as part of a reduction in force. This decision was driven by [brief business reason] and isn't a reflection of your performance.

Key details:

- Separation date: [Date]. [If notice period: you will be paid your regular salary through this date. During the notice period, you are not expected to work.]
- Severance: we are offering [Number] weeks of pay, [plus COBRA premium support for Number months], in exchange for signing the attached separation agreement. You have [45] days to review it and [7] days to revoke after signing. We encourage you to review it with an attorney.
- Final pay: [Date and what's included, such as accrued vacation].
- Benefits: coverage continues through [Date]. You will receive COBRA information by mail.
- Unemployment: information about applying in [State] is attached.
- Support: [Outplacement services, EAP, references, or job search help].

[HR contact name] is your point of contact for questions: [Phone and email].

I'm sorry. Thank you for everything you have contributed.

[Manager or HR name]

Version 2: To remaining employees

SUBJECT Today's changes and what they mean for you

Hi everyone,

Earlier today, we made the difficult decision to reduce our team by [Number] people, mainly in [Teams]. Everyone affected has been told directly.

Why: [Honest business reason].

If you are still with us: your role, pay, and benefits aren't changing as a result of today's decision. Your manager will meet with your team [today or tomorrow] to talk through what this means for your work.

The people leaving us have made real contributions, and we are supporting them with [severance, benefits, outplacement].

I know this is hard news. Please bring questions to your manager, to HR, or to me.

[CEO name]

Subject lines to try

- Important information about your employment
- Today's changes and what they mean for you
- Your separation details and support
- Following up on today's conversation
- An update on our team

How to personalize it

- Have private conversations before any group announcement.
- State the separation date, pay, and severance clearly.
- Offer outplacement and references if you can.
- Brief remaining managers before the announcement.

| Mistakes to avoid

- Learning about the layoff from a mass email or locked laptop.
- Euphemisms that hide what's happening.
- Selection criteria you can't explain or that affect protected groups unevenly.
- Sending the remaining-team message before every affected person is told.

| Legal and compliance notes

The federal WARN Act requires employers with 100 or more employees to give 60 days of written notice before a plant closing or mass layoff, or pay in lieu of notice. Several states have their own mini-WARN laws with lower thresholds or longer notice periods, including California, New York, and New Jersey. In a group layoff, the OWBPA requires giving employees 40 and older 45 days to consider a release, 7 days to revoke, and a written disclosure of the job titles and ages of those selected and not selected in the decision unit. Run an adverse impact analysis on selection decisions with counsel.

| When to send it

The same day as the individual conversations. Hold layoffs early in the week, never right before a holiday, and send the remaining-team message only after all affected employees are told.

| Before you hit send

- Final pay timing meets the deadline for the employee's state.
- COBRA or state continuation and unemployment information are included where required.
- IT access removal is timed with the conversation, not before it.
- Nothing in the message explains or argues the reasons for an involuntary departure.
- The departing employee knows who to contact after their last day.

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