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Colorado wage and hour cheat sheet

Minimum wage, overtime, breaks, final pay, and record retention on one sheet. Rates verified November 2026.

Minimum wage

$15.16 per hour since January 1, 2026, set in the PAY CALC Order under Article XVIII, Section 15 of the Colorado Constitution and adjusted each year for inflation by the Consumer Price Index. The COMPS Order covers all private sector work, except for exempt jobs and employers, and covers employees paid by the hour, salary, piece rate, or commission. Tipped employees who regularly receive at least $1.64 per hour in tips must get a direct cash wage of at least $12.14 per hour, a tip credit of up to $3.02, as long as tips bring total pay to the full minimum wage. Non-emancipated minors may be paid 15% less, $12.89 per hour in 2026, subject to the Youth Employment Standards Rules. Several local governments set higher minimums for work done within their borders. For 2026 they are Denver $19.29 ($16.27 for tipped employees), Edgewater $18.17 ($13.50 tipped), the City of Boulder $16.82 ($13.80 tipped), and unincorporated Boulder County $16.82 ($13.80 tipped). The 15% reduction for minors does not apply in a city or county with a local minimum wage, except that Denver allows it for minors in city-certified youth employment programs. The state rate rises to $15.71 per hour on January 1, 2027, with a tipped cash wage of $12.69. The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment lists 2027 local rates of $19.84 in Denver ($16.82 tipped) and Edgewater, $18.17 in the City of Boulder ($15.15 tipped), and $17.43 in unincorporated Boulder County ($14.41 tipped).

Overtime

1.5x the regular rate of pay for any work over 40 hours per workweek, under Rule 4 of the Colorado Overtime and Minimum Pay Standards Order (COMPS Order #40, 7 CCR 1103-1, in effect since February 1, 2026). The workweek is any set period of 168 hours (7 days) starting on the same calendar day and hour each week. Hours from two or more workweeks cannot be averaged, and employers cannot give comp time instead of overtime pay. Rule 2.4 exempts some employees from overtime, including certain auto, truck, and farm implement dealer salespersons and mechanics, qualifying commission sales employees, and drivers covered by the federal Motor Carrier Act who are paid at least the equivalent of 50 hours at the Colorado minimum wage with overtime.

Daily overtime

Yes. Colorado requires 1.5x the regular rate for work over 12 hours per workday, or over 12 consecutive hours without regard to the start and end time of the workday, as well as over 40 hours per workweek (COMPS Order Rule 4.1.1). Whichever of the three calculations results in the greater payment of wages applies, so the same hours are not paid overtime twice. The employer sets the workday, a consecutive 24-hour period starting at the same hour each day. Meal periods may be subtracted when counting 12 consecutive hours only if they meet the Rule 5.1 meal period rules. There is no double-time requirement. Some employees are exempt from the 12-hour rule only, including medical transportation employees on 24-hour shifts who receive weekly overtime, Medicaid-funded direct care workers on 24-hour shifts, and hospital or nursing home employees paid under the federal 8 and 80 rule. Ski area employees working on ski operations are exempt from the 40-hour rule but not from the 12-hour rule.

Meal break

An uninterrupted, duty-free meal period of at least 30 minutes when the shift exceeds 5 consecutive hours (COMPS Order Rule 5.1). To the extent practical, it must start at least one hour after the shift begins and end at least one hour before the shift ends. The meal period can be unpaid only if the employee is completely relieved of all duties and free to pursue personal activities. When the nature of the work makes an uninterrupted meal period impractical, the employee

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must be allowed to eat an on-duty meal while working, and that time must be paid.

Rest break

A paid 10-minute rest period for each 4 hours of work or major fraction of 4 hours (COMPS Order Rule 5.2). The required number is 0 for 2 hours of work or less, 1 for over 2 and up to 6 hours, 2 for over 6 and up to 10 hours, 3 for over 10 and up to 14 hours, and 1 more for each additional 4 hours. To the extent practical, each rest period falls in the middle of the 4-hour work period, and the employee does not have to leave the premises. Rest periods count as time worked. An employee and employer may agree in writing to two 5-minute breaks instead of one 10-minute break if 5 minutes is enough to reach a bathroom or break location. When a required rest period is not authorized and permitted, the employer owes 10 minutes of extra pay for each missed rest period.

Final paycheck

Discharged or laid off: immediately (C.R.S. § 8-4-109(1)(a)). If the employer's payroll unit is not regularly scheduled to be operating at the time, wages must be available no later than six hours after the start of the payroll unit's next regular workday, or, if the payroll unit is off the work site, delivered within 24 hours after the start of its next regular workday to the work site, the employer's local office, or the employee's last-known mailing address. Quit or resigned: by the next regular payday (C.R.S. § 8-4-109(1)(b)). If wages left at the work site or local office are not received within 60 days, the employer must mail the check. An employer that does not pay within 14 days after a written demand or a filed claim faces penalties of at least two times the unpaid wages or $1,000, whichever is greater.

How long to keep time records

Federal law requires keeping time cards 2 years and payroll records 3 years, and some states go longer. Keep the records where you can produce them; a wage claim is decided on whoever has the better records.

Rates verified November 2026. The $15.16 state rate took effect January 1, 2026, and the state constitution adjusts it every January 1 by the Consumer Price Index. The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment announced on August 13, 2026, that the rate will be $15.71 per hour ($12.69 tipped cash wage) on January 1, 2027. COMPS Order #40 has governed overtime, meal, and rest rules since February 1, 2026. A proposed COMPS Order #41, mainly changing agricultural overtime under SB 26-121 and addressing tips and service charges, is in rulemaking for January 1, 2027. Denver, Edgewater, the City of Boulder, and unincorporated Boulder County set higher local minimums, and the city or county rate applies to work done there. This is general information, not legal or payroll advice. Check the Colorado labor department for the current rules, and talk to a professional for your situation.

Primary source: https://cdle.colorado.gov/dlss. Full list of sources: getclox.com/blog/colorado-time-tracking.