



North Carolina wage and hour cheat sheet

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

Minimum wage

\$7.25/hr, North Carolina follows the federal minimum wage (unchanged since 2009; no increase for 2026, no state-scheduled effective date). No local variants: state law preempts cities/counties from setting a higher rate. Tipped wage is \$2.13/hr plus tip credit up to \$7.25; a \$4.25/hr training wage may apply to workers under 20 for their first 90 days.

Overtime

1.5x the regular rate for all hours worked over 40 in a workweek. NC has adopted the federal FLSA standard; overtime is calculated per workweek, and "each workweek stands on its own."

Daily overtime

None. No daily overtime or double-time. NC DOL states pay is based on hours worked each workweek, not by hours worked each day.

Meal break

No state meal-break requirement for adults. The NC Wage and Hour Act does not require meal breaks for employees 16 or older. (Minors under 16 must get a 30-minute break after 5 hours.)

Rest break

No state rest-break requirement for adults. The NC Wage and Hour Act does not require rest breaks for employees 16 or older. If short breaks (5 to 20 minutes) are given, they are generally paid under FLSA rules.

Final paycheck

On or before the next regular payday following separation, regardless of whether the employee quit, was laid off, or was fired. Wages based on bonuses/commissions are due on the first regular payday after the amount can be calculated.

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 August 2026. North Carolina's minimum wage is tied to the federal rate and has been \$7.25 since July 24, 2009, with no change scheduled. State law preempts local minimum-wage ordinances, so there are no city or county variants. This is general information, not legal or payroll advice. Check the North Carolina labor department for the current rules, and talk to a professional for your situation.

Primary source:

<https://www.labor.nc.gov/workplace-rights/employee-rights-regarding-time-worked-and-wages-earned/minimum-wage-nc>. Full list of sources: getclox.com/blog/north-carolina-time-tracking.