Minnesota Expands and Strengthens Meal and Rest Break Rules

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New law effective in 2026 imposes minimum break times, expands eligibility and introduces penalties for noncompliance

- New standards go into effect on January 1, 2026, for Minnesota employers.
- Requires minimum 15-minute rest breaks and 30-minute meal breaks
- Adds penalties for missed or insufficient breaks

Minnesota has enacted new requirements for employee meals and rest breaks, expanding existing protections and imposing penalties for noncompliance. The amendments to Minnesota Statutes §177.253 and §177.254 will take effect on January 1, 2026.

Under the current law, employers are required to provide "adequate time" for a restroom break at least once every four-hour shift. The new law clarifies that "adequate time" cannot be less than 15 minutes. Beginning in 2026, employers must offer either a 15-minute rest break or enough time to use the restroom — whichever is longer.

Similarly, the law will change the unpaid meal break requirement from "sufficient time to eat a meal" to a minimum length of 30 minutes. In addition, employers will be required to provide a meal break for every employee working a shift of six hours or more, as opposed to the current law requiring meal

breaks for shifts of more than eight hours.

For both paid rest breaks and unpaid meal breaks, the new law adds a remedy for violations. Employees who do not receive the required breaks will be eligible to receive damages equal to two times the amount earned during the missed break at the employee's regular rate of pay.

The practical impact of these provisions will vary by workplace, but all Minnesota employers should assess whether their current practices align with the new standards and make adjustments as needed before the law takes effect.

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