

Colorado labor law checklist 2026

Minimum wage	\$15.16 an hour.
Tipped cash wage	\$12.14
Next change	\$15.71 (tipped \$12.69) on January 1, 2027
Local rates	Denver, Edgewater, and unincorporated Boulder County set local minimum wages above the state rate.
Overtime	Overtime at 1.5 times the regular rate after 40 hours in a week, 12 hours in a workday, or 12 consecutive hours regardless of the workday.
Exempt salary test	Exempt employees must earn at least \$1,111.23 a week (\$57,784 a year) in 2026 under the COMPS Order.
Meal breaks	A 30-minute uninterrupted, duty-free meal period for shifts over 5 hours, under the COMPS Order. If the job makes that impossible, an on-duty paid meal period is allowed.
Rest breaks	A paid 10-minute rest period for every 4 hours worked or major fraction of 4 hours.
Final pay if fired	Immediately. If the payroll unit isn't open, within 6 hours of the start of its next workday (24 hours if it's off-site).
Final pay if they quit	By the next regular payday.
Unused PTO	Required. Earned vacation can't be forfeited, so it must be paid at separation.
Paid sick leave	Healthy Families and Workplaces Act: 1 hour for every 30 hours worked, up to 48 hours a year, for employers of every size, plus extra public health emergency leave when declared.
Paid family leave	FAMLI: up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave (16 for pregnancy or childbirth complications), funded by premiums usually split between employer and employee.
Pay transparency	Required for all employers: pay range and a general description of benefits in every posting, and notice of promotion opportunities.
New hire reporting	Report each new hire within 20 days of the hire date, the federal deadline.
State income tax	Withhold state income tax.
State agency	Colorado Department of Labor and Employment: https://cdle.colorado.gov/dlss

What trips up Colorado employers

- ☐ Colorado's exempt salary threshold is well above the federal level and rises every year.
- ☐ Earned vacation can't be forfeited, so use-it-or-lose-it policies don't work here.
- ☐ Job postings must include a pay range and benefits, and internal promotion opportunities must be announced to staff.
- ☐ Denver, Edgewater, and unincorporated Boulder County set higher local minimum wages.
- ☐ Check the minimum wage on January 1 and July 1, and update payroll and posters.
- ☐ Confirm final pay timing before every termination meeting.

All 50 states and DC, comparison tables, and a free CSV: hrtally.com/state-labor-laws

Compare HR and payroll software for multi-state employers at www.hrtally.com