
Final Rule to Update the Regulations Defining and Delimiting the Exemption for Executive, Administrative, and Professional Employees

In 2014, President Obama directed the Department of Labor to update and modernize the regulations governing the exemption of executive, administrative, and professional (“EAP”) employees from the minimum wage and overtime pay protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA” or “Act”). The Department published a notice of proposed rulemaking on July 6, 2015, and received more than 270,000 comments. On May 18, 2016, the Department announced that it will publish a Final Rule to update the regulations. The full text of the Final Rule will be available at the Federal Register Site.

Key Provisions of the Final Rule:

The Final Rule focuses primarily on updating the salary and compensation levels needed for EAP workers to be exempt. Specifically, the Final Rule:

1. Sets the standard salary level at the 40th percentile of earnings of full-time salaried workers in the lowest-wage Census Region, currently the South, which is \$913 per week or \$47,476 annually for a full-year worker;
2. Sets the total annual compensation requirement for highly compensated employees (HCE) subject to equivalent of the 90th percentile of full-time salaried workers nationally, which is \$134,004; and

3. Establishes a mechanism for automatically updating the salary and compensation levels every three years to maintain the levels at the above percentiles and to ensure that they continue to provide useful and effective tests for exemption.

Additionally, the Final Rule amends the salary basis test to allow employers to use nondiscretionary bonuses and incentive payments (including commissions) to satisfy up to 10 percent of the new standard salary level. The Final Rule makes no changes to the duties tests.

The effective date of the Final Rule is December 1, 2016. The initial increases to the standard salary level (from \$455 to \$913 per week) and HCE total annual compensation requirement (from \$100,000 to \$134,004 per year) will be effective on that date. Future automatic updates to those thresholds will occur every three years, beginning on January 1, 2020.

What This Means for Counties

It may be necessary to review salary and compensation levels for executive, administrative and professional workers periodically to ensure FLSA compliance.

For more information, contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.