

Breaks

Rest breaks and meal breaks

A rest break allows an employee to rest for a short period of time during work hours. Rest breaks are also referred to as 'crib breaks', 'rest pauses' or 'tea breaks'.

A meal break is a longer period of uninterrupted rest that allows the employee to eat a meal.

Awards, enterprise agreements and other [registered agreements \(www.fairwork.gov.au/Dictionary.aspx?TermID=2034\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/Dictionary.aspx?TermID=2034) provide for paid and unpaid rest breaks and meal breaks, including:

- the length of the breaks
- when they need to be taken
- the rules about payment.

Breaks between shifts

Awards and registered agreements may provide for a minimum amount of time off between the end of one shift and the start of another.

To find information about the minimum break requirements in your industry, please select from the list below.

Based on what you've told us, it looks like you're covered by the Plumbing and Fire Sprinklers Award [MA000036].

A rest break is a 10 minute paid break that counts as time worked.

A meal break is a 30 minute unpaid break that doesn't count as time worked. The majority of on-site employees on a project can request and agree to lengthen the meal break to 45 minutes.

An employee gets 1 rest break and 1 meal break each day.

Check the Plumbing Award for information about wash time before lunch.

Taking breaks

The rest break has to be taken between 9am and 11am.

The meal break has to be taken between noon and 1pm.

Shiftworkers can't be asked to work more than 5 hours without a meal break.

When a meal break isn't given

If an employee has to work during their meal break to finish work, they have to be paid:

- the double time rate for plumbing and mechanical services employees
- the time and half rate for sprinkler fitter employees.

This is paid for the time they work until they get a meal break. An employee can agree to shorten their meal break. When this happens, the time that the meal break is shortened by (eg. 15 minutes):

- has to be paid
- is counted as part of their normal hours.

Breaks between shifts after working overtime

Employees who work overtime have to get a minimum break of 10 hours between finishing work on 1 day and starting work the next day.

This minimum break between shifts applies only after an employee works overtime.

For breaks when working overtime, see [When overtime applies \(https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/hours-of-work-breaks-and-rosters/hours-of-work/when-overtime-applies\)](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/hours-of-work-breaks-and-rosters/hours-of-work/when-overtime-applies).

If an employee doesn't get a break between shifts

When employees don't get a 10 hour break between shifts when working overtime and they start at their normal shift time the next day they get paid:

- double time for the hours they work, until they're released from duty to have a 10 hour break between shifts
- when they eventually get their break between shifts, the ordinary hourly pay rate for any ordinary hours they don't work because they are taking the break.

When employees get a 10 hour break between shifts but start work later than their normal shift the next day so they get a break they get paid:

- for all the hours they work
- the ordinary pay rate for the hours between when they were originally rostered to start work and when they actually started work.

Example: When employees have to start later to get a break between shifts

Alice is a full-time employee who works ordinary hours:

- 9am - 6pm on Monday - Thursday
- 7am - 3pm on Friday.

She is entitled to a 10 hour break between shifts.

Alice's employer asks her to work an extra 4 hours on Thursday so that she finishes at 10pm. If she starts work on Friday at her normal time of 7am she will only get 9 hours break.

If Alice starts work at:

- 7am on Friday, then she will be paid double the ordinary hourly pay rate for all hours worked on Friday
- 8am on Friday, then she will be paid the ordinary pay rate for the hours she:
 - didn't work from 7am - 8am (because this hour is part of her ordinary hours)
 - worked from 8am - 3pm.

To find out more about who this award applies to, go to the [Plumbing Award summary \(https://www.fairwork.gov.au/awards-and-agreements/awards/award-summary/ma000036-summary\)](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/awards-and-agreements/awards/award-summary/ma000036-summary) .

Source reference: [Plumbing and Fire Sprinklers Award \[MA000036\] clauses 21.7\(o\)\(iii\), 29.5, 30, 32.2 and 33.4 \(http://award-viewer.fwo.gov.au/award/show/MA000036\)](http://award-viewer.fwo.gov.au/award/show/MA000036) 

Think a mistake might have been made?

Mistakes can happen. The best way to fix them usually starts with talking.

Check out our [Help resolving workplace issues \(www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/how-we-help-you/help-resolving-workplace-issues/default\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/how-we-help-you/help-resolving-workplace-issues/default) section for practical advice on:

- figuring out if a mistake has been made
- talking to your employer or employee about fixing it
- getting help from us if you can't resolve it.

What to do next

- Check [When overtime applies \(www.fairwork.gov.au/Employee-entitlements/hours-of-work-breaks-and-rosters/Hours-of-work/when-overtime-applies\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/Employee-entitlements/hours-of-work-breaks-and-rosters/Hours-of-work/when-overtime-applies)
- Check how to include breaks in [Rosters \(www.fairwork.gov.au/Employee-entitlements/hours-of-work-breaks-and-rosters/rosters\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/Employee-entitlements/hours-of-work-breaks-and-rosters/rosters)

You might also be interested in

- [Awards \(www.fairwork.gov.au/awards-and-agreements/Awards/default\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/awards-and-agreements/Awards/default)

Contact us

Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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Contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50

Hearing & speech assistance

Call through the National Relay Service (NRS):

For TTY: 13 36 77. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline 13 13 94

Speak & Listen: 1300 555 727. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline 13 13 94

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