

§ 548.305 Excluding certain additions to wages.

(a) Section 548.3(e) authorizes as established basic rates: "The rate or rates (not less than the rates required by section 6 (a) and (b) of the Act) which may be used under the Act to compute overtime compensation of the employee but excluding additional payments in cash or in kind which, if included in the computation of overtime under the Act, would not increase the total compensation of the employee by more than 50 cents a week on the average for all overtime weeks (in excess of the number of hours applicable under section 7(a) of the Act) in the period for which such additional payments are made."

(b) Section 548.3(e) permits the employer, upon agreement or understanding with the employee, to omit from the computation of overtime certain incidental payments which have a trivial effect on the overtime compensation due. Examples of payments which may be excluded are: modest housing, bonuses or prizes of various sorts, tuition paid by the employer for the employee's attendance at a school, and cash payments or merchandise awards for soliciting or obtaining new business. It may also include such things as payment by the employer of the employee's social security tax.

(c) The exclusion of one or more additional payments under § 548.3(e) must not affect the overtime compensation of the employee by more than 50 cents a week on the average for the overtime weeks.

Example. An employee, who normally would come within the 40-hour provision of section 7(a) of the Act, is paid a cost-of-living bonus of \$260 each calendar quarter, or \$20 per week. The employee works overtime in only 2 weeks in the 13-week period, and in each of these overtime weeks he works 50 hours. He is therefore entitled to \$2 as overtime compensation on the bonus for each week in which overtime was worked (i.e., \$20 bonus divided by 50 hours equals 40 cents an hour; 10 overtime hours, times one-half, times 40 cents an hour, equals \$2 per week). Since the overtime on the bonus is more than 50 cents on the average for the 2 overtime weeks, this cost-of-living bonus would not be excluded from the overtime computation under § 548.3(e).

(d) It is not always necessary to make elaborate computations to determine whether the effect of the exclusion of a bonus or other incidental payment on the employee's total compensation will exceed 50 cents a week on the average. Frequently the addition to regular wages is so small or the number of overtime hours is so limited that under any conceivable circumstances exclusion of the additional payments from the rate used to compute the employee's overtime compensation would not affect the employee's total earnings by more than 50 cents a week. The determination that this is so may be made by inspection of the payroll records or knowledge of the normal working hours.

Example. An employer has a policy of giving employees who have a perfect attendance record during a 4-week period a bonus of \$10. The employee never works more than 50 hours a week. It is obvious that exclusion of this attendance bonus from the rate of pay used to compute overtime compensation could not affect the employee's total earnings by more than 50 cents a week.¹⁴

(e) There are many situations in which the employer and employee cannot predict with any degree of certainty the amount of bonus to be paid at the end of the bonus period. They may not be able to anticipate with any degree of certainty the number of hours an employee might work each week during the bonus period. In such situations the employer and employee may agree prior to the performance of the work that a bonus will be disregarded in the computation of overtime pay if the employee's total earnings are not affected by more than 50 cents a week on the average for all overtime weeks during the bonus period. If it turns out at the end of the bonus period that the effect on the employee's total compensation would not exceed 50 cents a week on the average, then additional overtime compensation must be paid on the bonus. (See § 778.209 of this chapter, for an explanation of how to compute overtime on the bonus.)

¹⁴For a 50-hour week, an employee's bonus would have to amount to \$5 a week to affect his overtime compensation by 50 cents.

(f) In order to determine whether the exclusion of a bonus or other incidental payment would affect the total compensation of the employee by not more than 50 cents a week on the average, a comparison is made between his total compensation computed under the employment agreement and his total compensation computed in accordance with the applicable overtime provisions of the Act.

Example. An employee, who normally would come within the 40-hour provision of section 7(a) of the Act, is paid at piece rates and at one and one-half times the applicable piece rates for work performed during hours in excess of 40 in the workweek. The employee is also paid a bonus, which when apportioned over the bonus period, amounts to \$2 a week. He never works more than 50 hours a week. The piece rates could be established as basic rates under the employment agreement and no additional overtime compensation paid on the bonus. The employee's total compensation computed in accordance with the applicable overtime provision of the Act, section 7(g)(1)¹⁵ would be affected by not more than 20 cents in any week by not paying overtime compensation on the bonus.¹⁶

(g) Section 548.3(e) is not applicable to employees employed at subminimum wage rates under learner certificates, or special certificates for handicapped workers, or in the case of employees in Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands employed at special minimum rates authorized by wage orders issued pursuant to the Act.

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§ 548.306 Average earnings for year or quarter year preceding the current quarter.

(a) Section 548.3(f)(1) authorizes as an established basic rate:

A rate per hour for each workweek equal to the average hourly remuneration of the employee for employment during the annual period or the quarterly period immediately

¹⁵Section 7(g)(1) of the Act provides that overtime compensation may be paid at one and one-half times the applicable piece rate but extra overtime compensation must be properly computed and paid on additional pay required to be included in computing the regular rate.

¹⁶Bonus of \$2 divided by fifty hours equals 4 cents an hour. Half of this hourly rate multiplied by ten overtime hours equals 20 cents.

preceding the calendar or fiscal quarter year in which such workweek ends, provided (i) it is a fact, confirmed by proper records of the employer, that the terms, conditions, and circumstances of employment during such prior period, including weekly hours of work, work assignments and duties, and the basis of remuneration for employment, were not significantly different from the terms, conditions, and circumstances of employment which affect the employee's regular rates of pay during the current quarter year, and (ii) such average hourly remuneration during the prior period is computed by the method or methods authorized in the following subparagraphs.

(b) There may be circumstances in which it would be impossible or highly impracticable for an employer at the end of a pay period to compute, allocate, and pay to an employee certain kinds of remuneration for employment during that pay period. This may be true in the case of such types of compensation as commissions, recurring bonuses, and other incentive payments which are calculated on work performance over a substantial period of time. Since the total amount of straight-time remuneration is unknown at the time of payment the full regular rate cannot be ascertained and overtime compensation could not be paid immediately except for the provisions of § 548.3(f). In many such situations, the necessity for any subsequent computation and payment of the additional overtime compensation due on these types of remuneration can be avoided and all overtime premium pay due under the Act, including premium pay due on such a commission, bonus or incentive payment, can be paid at the end of the pay period rather than at some later date, if the parties to the employment agreement so desire. This is authorized by § 548.3(f)(1), which provides an alternate method of paying overtime premium pay by permitting an employer, under certain conditions, to use an established basic rate for computing overtime premium pay at the end of each pay period rather than waiting until some later date when the exact amounts of the commission, bonus, or other incentive payment can be ascertained. Such established rate may also be used in other appropriate situations where the parties desire to avoid the necessity of recomputing the regular rate from week to week.