

Fact Sheet #17J: First Responders and the Part 541 Exemptions Under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

The [FLSA](#) requires that most employees in the United States be paid at least the [federal minimum wage](#) for all hour worked and [overtime pay](#) at time and one-half the regular rate of pay for all hours worked over 40 in a workweek. However, Section 13(a)(1) of the FLSA provides an exemption from both [minimum wage](#) and [overtime pay](#) for employees employed as bona fide [executive](#), [administrative](#), [professional](#) and [outside sales](#) employees. Section 13(a)(1) and Section 13(a)(17) also exempts certain [computer](#) employees. To qualify for exemption, employees must meet certain tests regarding their job duties and be paid on a salary basis at not less than \$455* per week.

Police Officers, Fire Fighters and Other First Responders

Police officers, detectives, deputy sheriffs, state troopers, highway patrol officers, investigators, inspectors, correctional officers, parole or probation officers, park rangers, fire fighters, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, ambulance personnel, rescue workers, hazardous materials workers and similar employees (“first responders”) who perform work such as preventing, controlling or extinguishing fires of any type; rescuing fire, crime or accident victims; preventing or detecting crimes; conducting investigations or inspections for violations of law; performing surveillance; pursuing, restraining and apprehending suspects; detaining or supervising suspected and convicted criminals, including those on probation or parole; interviewing witnesses; interrogating and fingerprinting suspects; preparing investigative reports; and other similar work are not exempt under Section 13(a)(1) or the regulations and thus are protected by the [minimum wage](#) and [overtime](#) provisions of the FLSA.

First responders generally do not qualify as exempt executives because their primary duty is not management. They are not exempt administrative employees because their primary duty is not the performance of office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer’s customers. Similarly, they are not exempt learned professionals because their primary duty is not the performance of work requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction. Although some first responders have college degrees, a specialized academic degree is not a standard prerequisite for employment.

Where to Obtain Additional Information

For additional information, visit our Wage and Hour Division Website: <http://www.wagehour.dol.gov> and/or call our toll-free information and helpline, available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in your time zone, 1-866-4USWAGE (1-866-487-9243).

This publication is for general information and is not to be considered in the same light as official statements of position contained in the regulations.

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1-866-4-USWAGE
TTY: 1-866-487-9243
[Contact Us](#)

Note (added January 2018):

*The Department of Labor is undertaking rulemaking to revise the regulations located at 29 C.F.R. part 541, which govern the exemption of executive, administrative, and professional employees from the Fair Labor Standards Act’s minimum wage and overtime pay requirements. Until the Department issues its final rule, it will enforce the part 541 regulations in effect on November 30, 2016, including the \$455 per week standard salary level. These regulations are available at: <https://www.dol.gov/whd/overtime/regulations.pdf>