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What are normal working hours in South Africa?



Do you know what the normal working hours are for employees in the South African workplace?

In South Africa, the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA)* stipulates various basic conditions for safe and fair employment. One of the most important aspects of which many employees and employers may not be fully aware is the regulation of working hours. Chapter 2 and section 6 of the *BCEA regulate working time*, including all hours and overtime.

The current earnings threshold is R205 433,30 per year. Senior managerial employees or sales staff who travel to premises of customers regulate their own hours of work. These provisions may also be regulated by collective agreement where applicable within specific industries.

There are several aspects involved in determining normal working hours in South Africa, and that is what we will be looking at in this article. The following is applicable to employees earning less than the determined threshold.

What are the normal working hours in a week?

Section 9 of the BCEA stipulates that an employee may not be required or allowed to work more than:

- 45 hours per week.
- nine hours in a day (excluding lunch break) in a working week of five days or less.
- eight hours in a day (excluding lunch break) in a working week or more than five days a week.

However, these times may, by agreement, be extended, especially in the case of employees whose duties involve serving members of the public. Such extensions may be up to 15 minutes in a day but may not exceed 60 minutes in a week.

What are the regulations regarding overtime?

Overtime is a major concern for many businesses and employees, especially with today's pace of work and workloads. According to section 10 of the BCEA, employers may not require or permit employees to work overtime unless this is in accordance with a legal agreement.

In cases where there is an agreement, overtime may not exceed three hours in a single day or ten hours in a week.

Are meal intervals a requirement?

According to section 14 of the BCEA, employees who work for more than five continuous hours in a day must be allowed a meal interval (or lunch break) of at least one continuous hour. In terms of the Act, a 'continuous' five hours means that there is no interruption of 60 minutes (lunch break is unpaid time) or longer during those five hours. Therefore, an employee who works a five-day week and receives a lunch break of one hour daily will be at the workplace for 50 hours weekly (45 hours normal working time plus five hours for daily lunch breaks).

Employees may only be required to perform duties which cannot be left unattended during this time.

Should you require additional information regarding matters relating to normal working hours in South Africa, you can consult the Department of Labour's website and its resources. For professional assistance from our team of Labour consultants, *contact us* and we will help you make sense of the BCEA and its requirements through our *Labour Pro for businesses* service.

About our Author: Henri Klopper joined SERR Synergy in 2014 and holds the title of Gauteng Labour Manager. He completed his LLB at the University of Pretoria in 2010 where he also attended law school. Henri was admitted as an advocate of the High Court of South Africa.

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