

5. MEAL BREAKS

Introduction

This agreement commences from 3 April 2000, and establishes a new national standard in relation to meal relief entitlements, together with a process for all offices to achieve it. This agreement replaces all existing national and local agreements on meal relief entitlements and provision. The new entitlements will be introduced alongside SWW as part of the performance improvement programme agreed within the context of PBS.

Fill-time meal break entitlements

All full-time employees working in delivery offices on a 40-hour gross week over five or six days will generally have a standard entitlement to 40 minutes meal break per day and 30 minutes on the shorter day (normally Saturday) of a six day attendance, exclusive of any grace breaks (see below).

All full-time employees working in Mail Centres on a 40-hour gross week, generally over five days, will have a standard entitlement to 40 minutes meal break per day (this means that up to 60 minutes per day total breaks can be provided by scheduling Relaxation Breaks by joint local agreement – see below).

Other full-time employees on standard attendance patterns will have the same entitlements as in delivery.

Where there are unusual duty patterns (e.g. long or short attendance patterns, or jobs with fewer than attendances per week) the meal break entitlement will be determined on a daily basis for each attendance from the table of entitlements below.

Where the proper entitlement (i.e. based on the national standard and the table below) is currently exceeded, meal breaks in the offices concerned will be harmonised with the standard over the three-year life of the performance Bonus Scheme. This will be implemented in equal stages up to April 2002 as part of the joint revision programme.

Meal Brakes for non-standard, as part-time and extended attendances

Part-time jobs, and full-time jobs with non-standard attendance patterns, will attract meal breaks for each daily attendance as followed, reflecting a generally pro-rata entitlement to the national weekly standard:

Attendance length	total breaks	probable pattern
Less than 2 hours 30 minutes provided if work permits)	none	(a 10 min grace break should be
2 hours 30 to 3 hours	10 mins	10
3 hours 1 to 3 hours 30	15 mins	15
3 hours 31 to 4 hours 59	20 mins	20

5 hours to 7 hours	30 mins	30
7 hours 1 to 8 hours 59 20	40 mins	40 or 20 + 20
9 hours to 10 hours 59	50 mins	30 + 20
11 hours to 12 hours 59 30 + 30	60 mins	40 + 20 or 30 + 30
13 hours or longer	70 mins	40 + 30

Pending completion of the discussions intended to conform with the requirements of the Working Time Regulations, any exceptional attendances of 15 hours or longer will attract an entitlement of 80 minutes.

The actual pattern of breaks within these rules will be agreed locally.

Overtime and Schedule Attendance

Attendances consisting wholly of overtime, or of Scheduled Attendance on Sunday, should attract paid breaks based on the length of the attendance as in the table above. Attendances consisting wholly of weekday SA should attract unpaid breaks on the same basis, at least one of which must be schedule within the attendance rather than at the beginning or end. Where there is a gap of up to 59 minutes between duty and overtime (but not Scheduled Attendance, except on Sunday) that cannot be filled with useful work, this will be considered booked through time and paid for at normal overtime rates.

Conditioned attendances extended by overtime (or by SA on Sunday) consecutive with the beginning or end will attract additional breaks if the entitlement for the total attendance (overtime plus conditioned hours), in the table above, is greater than the breaks already scheduled during the conditioned attendance. For example, an 8 hour conditioned attendance with 4 hours overtime would attract an extra 20 minutes (i.e. 60 minus 40). In most cases, particularly if the additional break is for only 10 minutes, it should be taken between the period of overtime and the normal conditioned attendance.

Young employees

Meal breaks for employees aged under 18 should be arranged to provide at least a 30 minute meal break on any attendance of four and a half hours or more in length.

Breaks at the beginning or end of attendance

Where an attendance is provided with more than one break, the second break may be scheduled at the beginning or end, in which case attendance is not required solely for booking on or off. A single break should not be scheduled at the beginning or end of the attendance.

Grace Breaks

When work permits a grace break of 10 minutes, over and above the standard entitlements, should be allowed on all indoor and outdoor jobs. In no circumstances should this be scheduled. Where it is not possible to provide a grace break before going out on first delivery the employee should be given the chance to have cup of tea before leaving the office.

Relaxation Allowance

In the parts of Mail Centres covered by workload measurement and planning values, the additional grace break may be extended to 20 minutes for full-time indoor jobs and scheduled as “Relaxation Allowance”, as originally agreed in connection with RRP (10 minutes may be scheduled within indoor part-time jobs), on the basis that this represents an aggregation of the relaxation allowance already built into duties and therefore does not affect the number of hours scheduled or the cost of running the office. In total this provides a maximum scheduled daily break entitlement of 60 minutes for a standard five-day indoor attendance.

Exceptionally for MAA/VCS coders this Relaxation Allowance may be taken over and above any grace breaks on the basis of 10 minutes scheduled after every 60 minutes of coding work, as set out within the national agreement on IMP.

Relaxation Allowance is built in to delivery work standards through DPMS, and outdoor employees are able to manage their own workload and pace within these standards whilst out on delivery.

For indoor employees covered by workload measurement but not in Mail Centres (e.g. all-night inward sorting or ASAP work in delivery offices), there will be joint review of the issues relating to Relaxation Allowance.