

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
LIVING WAGE ORDINANCE
(Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 10.37 et seq.)

1. What is the Living Wage Ordinance?

The Living Wage Ordinance (LWO) requires employers who have agreements with the City to pay their employees at least a minimum “living wage” and to provide certain benefits. If the agreement is subject to the LWO, the employer must do the following:

- Pay employees working on the subject agreement a wage rate that is at least equal to the “living wage” rate. The “living wage” is adjusted annually and becomes effective July 1 of each year. Employers can obtain information about the living wage rate currently in effect by going to Department of Public Works, Bureau of Contract Administration, Office of Contract Compliance (OCC) website at www.lacity.org/bca/OCCmain.html.
- Provide employees with at least 12 paid days off per year for sick leave, vacation, or personal necessity; and at least 10 unpaid sick days off per year.
- Tell employees who make less than \$12.00 per hour that they may qualify for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit and provide them with the forms required to apply for the credit.
- Cooperate with the City by providing access to the work site and to payroll and related documents so that the City can determine if the employer is complying with the LWO.
- Pledge to comply with federal laws prohibiting an employer from retaliating against employees for union organizing.
- Not retaliate against any employee who makes claims about non-compliance with the LWO.

2. When was the Ordinance adopted?

The LWO was adopted in May, 1997 and amended in January, 1999.

3. What types of agreements are subject to the Ordinance?

Generally, the LWO covers the following types of agreements:

- An agreement in an amount over \$25,000.00 and for at least three months in which an employer will provide services to or for the City.
- An agreement for the lease or license of City property if the service being performed on the property is something that City employees would otherwise do.
- An agreement for the lease or license of City property that is in a location where a substantial number of the general public might visit.
- An agreement in which the City gives financial assistance for the purpose of promoting economic development or job growth.
- An agreement in which the City determines that applying the LWO would be in the best interest of the City.

4. Is an agreement subject to the LWO if it was entered into before May, 1997?

Agreements executed after May, 1997 are subject to the LWO. An agreement entered into before May, 1997 may become subject to LWO if it is later amended or modified in order to add time or money to the original agreement.

5. Are there any requirements that would apply to an employer who does not have an agreement with City that is subject to the LWO?

All employers are required to comply with the LWO's prohibition against retaliation, even if the employer does not have an agreement with the City that is subject to the Ordinance.

6. Are all employees covered by the Ordinance?

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7. Are an employer's subcontractors subject to the requirements of the Ordinance?

A subcontractor may be covered by the Ordinance if the subcontractor performs work on the subject agreement. If so, the subcontractor must also comply with the requirements of the LWO, including all reporting requirements. The prime contractor is responsible for the making sure that the subcontractor complies with the LWO.

8. What happens if an employer is found to be in violation of the Ordinance?

Payments due may be withheld. Also, the employer may be deemed to be in material breach of the agreement. When that happens, the City may take the following steps:

- Terminate the agreement and pursue all available contractual remedies.
- Debar the employer from doing business with the City for three (3) years or until all penalties and restitution have been fully paid, whichever occurs last.
- Bring a lawsuit against the employer for all unpaid wages and health benefit premiums and/or seek a fine of up to one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for each day the violation remains uncorrected.

9. What if a subcontractor is found to be in violation of the Ordinance?

Because the prime contractor is responsible for making sure that all its subcontractors comply with the LWO, the sanctions listed in answer #8 may be applied to the prime contractor if the subcontractor does not correct the violation(s).

10. What can an employee do if an employer is in violation of the Ordinance?

The employee can submit a complaint to the Office Contract Compliance which will investigate the complaint. Also, the employee can bring his or her own lawsuit against the employer for:

- Back pay for failing to pay the correct wages or correct health benefit premiums.
- Reinstatement and back pay for retaliation.
- Triple the amount of the back pay that is owed if the violation was found by the court to be willful.

11. Are there any exemptions available under the Ordinance?

An employer may apply for an exemption based on the following categories:

- Service agreements that are less than 3 months or \$25,000 or less.
- Agreements for the purchase of goods, property, or the leasing of property (with City as the lessee).
- Construction contracts that do not meet the definition of a service agreement.
- Employees who are required to have an occupational license in order to provide services to or for the City are exempt.
- Employers who are party to a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) that has language stating that the CBA shall supersede the LWO.
- Financial assistance recipients who meet the requirements stated in Section 10.37.1(c) of the LWO.
- Employers (contractors, subcontractors, financial assistance recipients) organized under IRS Code, Section 501(c)(3) whose chief executive officer's hourly wage rate is less than eight times the hourly wage rate of the lowest paid worker are be exempt. However, this exemption does not apply to child care workers.
- Lessees or licensees who have no more than a total of seven employees and who have annual gross revenue of less than \$415,488 (effective July 1, 2006). The qualifying annual gross revenue is adjusted every July.
- One-person contractors, lessees, licensees or financial assistance recipients who employ no workers.
- Agreements that involve other governmental entities.

12. Who is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Ordinance?

The Department of Public Works, Bureau of Contract Administration, Office of Contract Compliance, located at 1149 S. Broadway Street, 3rd Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90015. For additional information, please call (213) 847-1922, or go to the Office of Contract Compliance website at www.lacity.org/bca/OCCmain.html.