

16.11 MEAL ALLOWANCE

- 16.11.1 An employee who is unexpectedly retained on duty after a normal day's work for at least three hours beyond the normal working hours or who is required to be on duty during cyclonic conditions is currently provided with a meal, where catering facilities are available, or paid a meal allowance of Rs 130 for each meal.
- 16.11.2 Notwithstanding the above, the Chief Executive of an organisation is allowed, subject to availability of funds, to grant a meal or a meal allowance to employees retained for at least three hours of work beyond their normal working hours for urgent work or for the timely completion of an assignment or project although they have been given advance notice.
- 16.11.3 However, as per the current provisions, an employee who is scheduled to work according to a roster, shift or staggered hours or often who regularly has to put in extra hours of work is not granted a meal or paid a meal allowance. Where operational needs require an employee to work on shift, or roster basis, or at staggered hours, the organisation should, to the extent it is practical, provide employees access to appliances such as refrigerator, electric kettle and microwave/hot plate.
- 16.11.4 During consultations with Federations and Unions in the context of this review exercise, several proposals have been made to the effect that the quantum of meal allowance is inadequate and should be reviewed; the provisions pertaining to meal allowance should be extended to all categories of employees including those working on shift, or roster basis, or at staggered hours, whenever their services are required after their normal scheduled working hours; the qualifying hours for meal allowance for employees in the Workmen's Group be reviewed; and the provision of meals or payment of meal allowance should not be subject to the availability of funds. In addition, they represented that employees, though given advance notice to perform extra hours should be provided with a meal or meal allowance; and in line with the then Employment Rights Act, the provisions pertaining to meal allowance should be applied to all categories of employees if incumbents would be required to work more than two hours after their normal working hours.
- 16.11.5 The Bureau has perused the Workers' Rights Act (WRA) and is of the view that the provision of the Act has been crafted in line with the different working patterns and long sectoral hours of work in the Private Sector which is not of equitable value to those obtainable in the Public Service.
- 16.11.6 Further, researches on what obtain with regard the grant of meal or meal allowance in foreign countries, have revealed that the quantum of meal allowance varies from organisation to organisation and from country to country depending on their contract of employment and conditions of service.
- 16.11.7 Upon analysis of the submissions of all parties, the Bureau considers that there should be certain flexibility on the part of the Management to grant a meal or meal

allowance whenever employees are required to work beyond normal working hours although they have been given advance notice.

16.11.8 In view of the above, we consider that the existing provisions are still valid and are being maintained, while revising the quantum.

Recommendation 1

16.11.9 We recommend that employees who:

(a) are unexpectedly retained on duty after a normal day's work for at least three hours beyond their normal working hours; and

(b) are required to work during cyclonic conditions,

should either be provided with meals where catering facilities are available or paid a Meal Allowance of Rs 150 for each meal. For the purpose of the payment of meal allowance during cyclonic conditions, the official issuance of cyclone warning class III and IV should be considered.

16.11.10 We further recommend that notwithstanding the above provisions, a Supervising Officer of an organisation may grant a meal or a meal allowance of Rs 150 for each meal to officers although they have been given advance notice and retained beyond their normal working hours for urgent work or for the timely completion of an assignment or project which is of a longer duration of at least one month and require officers to continuously work for at least three hours beyond their normal working hours.

16.11.11 The recommendations at paragraphs 16.11.9 and 16.11.10 above are not applicable to an employee who is scheduled to work according to a roster or shift or at staggered hours or to an officer who regularly has to perform overtime.

16.11.12 We also recommend that where operational needs require employees to work on shift or roster basis, or at staggered hours, the organisation should, to the extent it is practical, provide appliances such as refrigerator, electric kettle and microwave/hot plate for use by them.
