

# Employment Law Business Guide

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## Are you ready for these 2016 changes to Massachusetts Wage and Hour Laws?

By Adam M. Hamel on December 29, 2015

When the ball drops on New Year's Eve two important changes to Massachusetts wage and hour law will take place.

The first change is that the Massachusetts minimum wage will increase to \$10.00 per hour effective January 1, 2016. For tipped employees, the minimum wage is increasing to \$3.35 per hour. (The service rate is applicable for service employees who receive tips of more than \$20 per month, and the average hourly tips when added to the service rate equals at least the minimum wage.) The New Year's increase to \$10.00 is the second increase in a three-year legislative program that started with 2015's increase in the minimum wage to \$9.00 per hour. The minimum wage will increase again on January 1, 2017 to \$11.00 per hour (\$3.75 for the service rate). Currently, there are no further changes planned beyond 2017.

The second change is that the so-called "safe harbor" to the Massachusetts Earned Sick Time Law will close on January 1, 2016. When the earned sick time law went into effect on July 1, 2015, the Attorney General announced a safe harbor, under which employers whose existing paid time off policies met certain minimum requirements would be deemed to be in compliance with the law for the remainder of 2015. When the safe harbor closes on New Year's Day, all employers must ensure that their policies and practices are fully compliant with all of the terms of the statute and accompanying regulations. For more information, see my earlier blog posts about the Earned Sick Time Law, [here](#) and [here](#), and the Attorney General's excellent web page about the Earned Sick Time Law.



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