

# Complaint filed over state Department of Corrections' labor practices

The U.S. Department of Labor has filed a federal complaint against the Washington State Department of Corrections for violations of overtime and record-keeping requirements under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

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The U.S. Department of Labor has filed a federal complaint against the Washington State Department of Corrections [DOC] alleging violations of overtime and record-keeping requirements under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The complaint is the result of a nearly three-year investigation by the labor agency.

According to the Department of Labor, community corrections officers, or probation officers; community corrections specialists; and office assistants across the state were not paid overtime for hours worked over 40 in a week. In addition, the agency failed to maintain accurate time records for all hours worked, according to the Department of Labor.

Federal labor officials believe that DOC violated the employment rights of nearly 800 workers.

"The total amount of back wages owed the employees has not been determined, but is expected to be in the millions of dollars," Donna Hart, director of the Wage and Hour Division's Seattle District Office, said in news release.

Under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, covered workers must be paid the federal minimum wage of \$5.85 an hour, and time and one-half their regular rates of pay for hours worked over 40 in one week. Also, accurate records of hours and pay must be maintained by the employer.

Karen Daniels, DOC's assistant secretary for community corrections, said that managers don't keep their employees from taking overtime, but that many corrections employees are hard workers who often don't put in for overtime. She said that the DOC is trying to figure out how much money they owe employees and "get to the bottom line."

"It isn't a job that is covered adequately by an 8-to-5 schedule," Daniels said. "They [employees] hear over the years there are budget pressures. They just feel some responsibility and conscientiousness."

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