

Pennsylvania Industrial Homework Act

Pennsylvania regulates—and in some cases prohibits—industrial homework, which the Industrial Homework Act defines as “any manufacture in a home of articles or materials for an employer, representative contractor or contractor.” In other words, no in-home sweatshops are allowed in Pennsylvania.

The act specifically prohibits the home-based manufacture of:

- Articles of food or drink.
- Articles for use in connection with the serving of food or drink.
- Toys and dolls.
- Tobacco.
- Drugs and poisons.
- Bandages and other sanitary goods.
- Explosives, fireworks and articles of like character.
- The tearing or sewing of rags. (Some exceptions apply.)
- Hazardous materials.

To accommodate disabled employees, permits are available for the manufacture of some items as long as the employee is at least 16 years old and isn't suffering from an infectious or contagious disease. To obtain a permit, employers must produce medical certification of the disabled worker's condition to the Secretary of Labor. Medical certification of the worker's condition is obtained at employer expense.

Special provisions apply to people who manufacture shoes in their homes. Shoe-manufacturing home workers don't need to be disabled to obtain a certificate. Any item manufactured in a home must be conspicuously labeled as such.

Violations of the law carry a \$1,000 fine or 60 days in jail. Selling or transporting unlabeled home-manufactured goods carries a \$500 fine or 30 days in jail. A second violation within five years can bring a \$5,000 fine and/or a 60- to 90-day jail sentence.

Tip: Be sure to check whether a work-at-home accommodation for a disabled employee conflicts with the law. This law is something of an anachronism, although it does appear to allow a work-at-home system for sewing garments and the like.

Excerpted from Pennsylvania's 13 Most Critical Employment Laws, a special bonus report available to subscribers of HR Specialist: [Pennsylvania Employment Law](#).