

Fleet: Basic hours of service

Understanding hours of service regulations

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) controls the hours of service regulations for carriers in interstate commerce. They apply to both commercial driver's license (CDL) equipment as well as non-CDL commercial motor vehicles (CMV), including box trucks, pickups pulling trailers or containing hazardous materials. If the carrier is an intrastate carrier, they can follow the hours of service regulations of that state, which may often be less restrictive.

Requirements:

Basic hours of service regulations require an electronic logging device (ELD) to record hours. Based on a 24-hour day, a driver can work and drive a total of 14 hours before they would be required to rest for 10 hours. The number of actual driving hours is limited to 11 of the 14 hours. The ELD will accurately record and distinguish between different hours.

The driver is also limited on a weekly basis to how many hours they can work. It is based on either a 7 day/60-hour week or 8 day/70-hour week.

During the day, a driver who is using an ELD must also have a 30-minute rest break.

- The 30-minute break must occur before driving again after a collective driving time of 8 hours.
- The break may be satisfied by any non-driving period of 30 minutes, including on-duty time, off-duty time or sleeper berth time. Time spent waiting at the dock while being unloaded can count if the driver has no assigned tasks and the unloading takes at least 30 consecutive minutes. For example, refined fuel drivers could claim their 30-minute break while waiting for fuel to be off loaded.

10 hours of off-duty rest must be taken consecutively. This off-duty rest break can be taken anywhere as long as the driver does not have responsibility for the truck or the load. Some trucks come equipped with a sleeper berth.

Hours of service and agriculture

On the agricultural side, some carriers can be exempt from hours of service regulations, which simply means they have no hours restrictions other than they cannot operate a motor vehicle while fatigued.

Emergency situations

Occasionally during some emergencies, like severe cold weather or harvest, the Governor of a State or the FMCSA may issue an executive order suspending the hours of service regulation during the time of the emergency with specific dates of start and expiration.

Short-haul exception

The commonly used 150 air mile radius, which is 172 statute mile radius, is officially known as the short-haul exception. This exception provides those who operate within these ranges an exemption from logging requirements through use of an ELD.

To qualify for the short-haul exception, the carrier must:

- Start and return to the same location each day without exceeding 150 air mile radius from the starting point; and
- Release the driver from work within 14 hours after having come on-duty.

Note, this exception is not for hours of service and the driver still cannot drive the vehicle more than 11 of the 14 hours of on-duty time.

Outside the radius

If a carrier drives outside of the 150 air mile radius, they would be required to complete a driver's log for that day. If taking place more than 8 times in any thirty day period, they would be required to have an ELD.

Non-CDL equipment

There is a short-haul exception for non-CDL equipment that is slightly different as it allows two 16-hour days within the work week or any time after a restart.

For further guidance, refer to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration 49 CFR Part 395 (ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-B/chapter-III/subchapter-B/part-395).



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