

TIME'S UP

Understanding The "Hours of Service" Rules

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) limit the number of continuous hours you can spend between the wheel. They do so for one simple, basic reason: safety. A tired driver is a dangerous driver. Fatigue has no place behind the wheel.

Time Limits

The federal rules say you can drive for no longer than 10 hours at a time. After that, you need to take eight hours off before you can drive again. Nor can you drive if you've had more than 15 hours on-duty time. Further, you're limited to either 60 or 70 hours of service per week, depending on whether your company operates on a six-or seven-day work week.

10-Hour Days

The rules say you must have eight hours of rest after spending 10 hours behind the wheel. If you want to drive a full 10 hours again, those eight hours of rest must be consecutive. You can't break them up.

Team drives, however, have an option. You and your partner can count time spent in the sleeper berth as off-duty time. So, if you use this rule correctly, you can keep going without a layover.

On-Duty Time

When the regulations talk about "on-duty time," they're not limiting themselves to the hours you spend behind the wheel. They also refer to the time spent on vehicle inspections, loading or unloading, making deliveries

and any other duties required by your company. The phrase also covers any period of time when you're required to be ready for work, even if you're not put to work immediately.

Service Maximum

If your company uses a six-day work week, you can have a maximum of 60 hours on-duty time in seven consecutive days. For seven-day weeks, you can have 70 on-duty hours in any eight consecutive days.

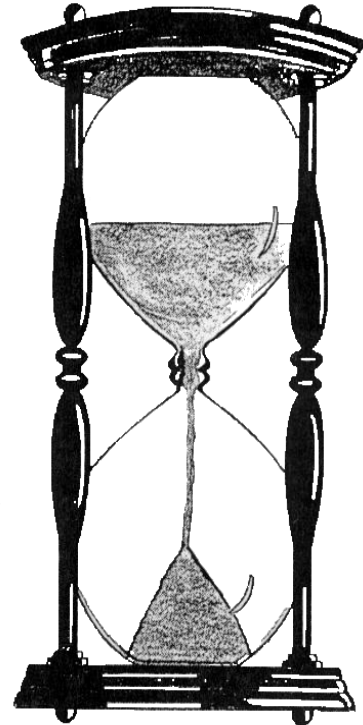
Your Log

It's because of these rules that your log is so important. All your hours must be recorded in the log, which is officially called your Record of Duty Status. Your company tells you what format to follow, but it's up to you to keep your log accurate and up-to-date. Fill it out every day. That way, you'll remember everything you've done in the last 24 hours. Your log has to reflect every hour of every day, whether you were on duty or not.

If you work for several companies, you still must follow the time rules and keep a record of duty status for each firm.

Be Truthful

The government is serious about enforcing these regulations. Penalties for falsifying records can be severe. You and your company are jointly responsible for keeping accurate records. Either of you can be fined for hours-of-service violations. If you've falsified your log, you can be placed out of service.



The federal regulations are not complicated. They may seem complex at time, but they're designed for your safety. Be a professional. Know these regs well and know how to keep a clean and accurate log.