

FAA News



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Fact Sheet

Pilot Fatigue Rule Comparison

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Acting Administrator Michael Huerta today announced a sweeping final rule that overhauls commercial passenger airline pilot scheduling to ensure pilots have a longer opportunity for rest before they enter the cockpit.

Key components of this final rule for commercial passenger flights include:

Varying requirements based on the type of flight and time of day it begins. The new rule incorporates the latest fatigue science to set different requirements for pilot flight time, duty period and rest based on the time of day pilots begin their first flight, the number of scheduled flight segments and the number of time zones they cross. The previous rules included different rest requirements for domestic, international and unscheduled flights. Those differences were not necessarily consistent across different types of passenger flights, and did not take into account factors such as start time and time zone crossings.

Flight duty period. The allowable length of a flight duty period depends on when the pilot's day begins and the number of flight segments he or she is expected to fly, and ranges from 9-14 hours for single crew operations. The flight duty period begins when a flightcrew member is required to report for duty with the intention of conducting a flight and ends when the aircraft is parked after the last flight. It includes the period of time before a flight or between flights that a pilot is working without an intervening rest period. Flight duty includes deadhead transportation, training in an aircraft or flight simulator, and airport standby or reserve duty if these tasks occur before a flight or between flights without an intervening required rest period.

Flight time limits of eight or nine hours. The FAA limits flight time – when the plane is moving under its own power before, during or after flight – to eight or nine hours depending on the start time of the pilot's entire flight duty period.

10-hour minimum rest period. The rule sets a 10-hour minimum rest period prior to the flight duty period, a two-hour increase over the previous rules. The new rule also mandates that a pilot must have an opportunity for eight hours of uninterrupted sleep within the 10-hour rest period.

New cumulative flight duty and flight time limits. The new rule addresses potential cumulative fatigue by placing weekly and 28-day limits on the amount of time a pilot may be assigned any type of flight duty. The rule also places 28-day and annual limits on actual flight time. It also requires that pilots have at least 30 consecutive hours free from duty on a weekly basis, a 25 percent increase over the previous rules.

Fitness for duty. The FAA expects pilots and airlines to take joint responsibility when considering if a pilot is fit for duty, including fatigue resulting from pre-duty activities such as commuting. At the beginning of each flight segment, a pilot is required to affirmatively state his or her fitness for duty. If a pilot reports he or she is fatigued and unfit for duty, the airline must remove that pilot from duty immediately. If a pilot reports they are fatigued, the airline must remove that pilot from duty immediately.

Fatigue Risk Management System. An airline may develop an alternative way of mitigating fatigue based on science and using data that must be validated by the FAA and continuously monitored.

In 2010, Congress mandated a Fatigue Risk Management Plan (FRMP) for all airlines, and the carriers have developed these plans based on FAA guidance materials. An FRMP provides education for pilots and airlines to help address the effects of fatigue, which can be caused by overwork, commuting, or other activities. Airlines will be required to train pilots about the potential effects of commuting.

Required training updates every two years will include fatigue mitigation measures, sleep fundamentals and the impact to a pilot’s performance. The training will also address how fatigue is influenced by lifestyle – including nutrition, exercise, and family life – as well as by sleep disorders and the impact of commuting.

Summary of Final Rule vs. Current Rule, by Provision:

Items	New Rule	Current/Previous Rule
Distinction Between Kind of Passenger Operations	Single rule for all kinds of operations. No distinctions.	Limits are different based upon the kind of operations.
Fitness For Duty	Joint responsibility between the pilot and airline for ensuring the pilot is fit for duty. The pilot must sign that he or she is “fit” to take the flight. If a pilot reports fatigue, the airline must remove that pilot from duty.	Current rule language requiring the pilot to report fit for duty is not as clear.
Fatigue Risk Management System	Option to develop an FAA-approved alternative method of compliance.	No option available.
Fatigue Education and Awareness Training Program	Provide annual fatigue education and awareness education for pilots, dispatchers, individuals directly involved in the scheduling of pilots, individuals directly involved in operational control,	Not required by current regulations, but is required as part of public law.

	and any employee providing direct management oversight of those areas.	
Flight Duty Period: Split Duty	Applied to night operations requiring at least 3 hours of rest during the flight duty period (FDP).	No limit.
Flight Duty Periods (FDP)	Limits the length of the FDP based upon the time the FDP starts and the number of segments flown.	Limits do not factor in circadian issues or the number of segments flown.
Reserve Status	The pilot must be given a rest period of at least 10 consecutive hours immediately before beginning a reserve period measured from the time the flightcrew member is released from duty.	No limit other than 24 hours free from duty in any 7 consecutive days.
Cumulative Limitations	Limits the FDP hrs during any week and four week period. Limits flight time for any four week period and any 365 day period.	Limits flight hours on a daily and yearly basis.
Rest Period	Requires 10 hour rest period of which 8 hours is an uninterrupted sleep opportunity.	9 hours reducible to 8 hours of rest. Does not factor in sleep opportunity.
Reduced Rest	Eliminated.	Reducible to 8 hours of rest.

Summary of Flight and Duty Limits, for Unaugmented Operations:

Maximum Flight Time Limits

Time of Report (Acclimated)	Maximum Flight Time (hours)
0000-0459	8
0500-1959	9
2000-2359	8

Maximum Flight Duty Period Limits for Unaugmented Operations*

Scheduled Time of Start (Acclimated Time)	Maximum Flight Duty Period (hours) For Lineholders Based on Number of Flight Segments						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
0000-0359	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
0400-0459	10	10	10	10	9	9	9
0500-0559	12	12	12	12	11.5	11	10.5
0600-0659	13	13	12	12	11.5	11	10.5
0700-1159	14	14	13	13	12.5	12	11.5
1200-1259	13	13	13	13	12.5	12	11.5

1300-1659	12	12	12	12	11.5	11	10.5
1700-2159	12	12	11	11	10	9	9
2200-2259	11	11	10	10	9	9	9
2300-2359	10	10	10	9	9	9	9

**Unaugmented operations are flights in which no reserve flightcrew is required.*

The final rule will be available at _____, and will take effect in two years to allow commercial passenger airline operators time to transition.

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