

Hours of Service Focus Group Research

• *Report on Findings* •



ENVIRONICS
R E S E A R C H G R O U P

Prepared for:
CCMTA
Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators

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Background and Methodology

The federal, provincial and territorial governments have been reviewing the hours of service rules for commercial vehicle drivers since the early 1990's. The Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) was directed by the Council of Ministers responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety to conduct an objective evaluation of the impacts of proposed changes on various industry stakeholders, including drivers.

In order to get input from drivers, CCMTA contracted with Environics Research Group to conduct a series of focus group session across Canada. This report summarizes the findings from these focus groups.

A total of 10 focus group sessions were conducted between October 28 and November 4, 2004 according to the following schedule:

October 28	1 session in Calgary
November 1	2 sessions in Mississauga 2 sessions in Vancouver
November 3	2 sessions in Moncton 1 session in Winnipeg
November 4	2 sessions in Montreal

Efforts were made to recruit a diverse group of 10 drivers to attend each session according to the following specifications:

- 4 Owner operators
- 4 Drivers employed by Public Carriers
- 1 Driver employed by a Private Carrier
- 1 Unionized driver (either public or private carrier)

To qualify, participants had to drive a truck with at least 18 wheels or a large passenger bus. They also had to do mainly highway driving.

A total of 91 drivers participated in the research (including 86 transport truck drivers and 5 bus drivers). Overall, participating drivers closely reflected the specifications noted above.

Those attending the groups were paid an honorarium of \$150.

Objectives

The primary purpose of the focus group sessions was to get input from drivers on the hours of service options under consideration (i.e., the 16-hour window of elapsed time and the 18-hour window of elapsed time).

Participants were asked for their views about the pros and cons of each option. They were also asked to comment specifically on their perceptions of the affect each option will have on:

- Road safety;
- Road Transportation Productivity;
- Enforcement and Administration; and
- Driver working conditions and lifestyle

Following a thorough discussion of each option, participants were also asked to indicate which option they personally preferred.

In the course of the focus group discussion, participants were also asked about their familiarity with CCMTA, and their familiarity with hours of service regulations in the U.S.

The discussion agenda used by the session moderators is appended to this report.

Key Findings

When asked to choose between the option of a 16-hour window of elapsed time and an 18-hour window of elapsed time, the drivers who participated in the focus group sessions indicated a clear preference for the 16-hour window (approximately 8 in 10 preferred this option). In fact, the consensus in all 10 sessions, and among all types of drivers (i.e. owner-operators, employees of public carriers and private carriers, and unionized and non-unionized drivers) was that 16-hour window was a better option for them.

The main reasons given for preferring the 16-hour window over the 18-hour window were that:

- It would allow drivers to finish their working day faster, and return home sooner;
- Drivers would not have as much down time to fill during their day; and
- Employers, shippers and receivers would not be as likely to saddle drivers with delays that they would be forced to log as rest time.

The few participants who preferred the 18-hour window did so mainly because they felt:

- It would allow extra rest time for those drivers who might want more rest.
- Drivers who might normally work under the 16-hour window could revert to the 18-hour window if they encountered delays.
- Certain runs might be easier to accomplish in the 18-hour window than the 16-hour window, such as:
 - LTL (less than a truck load) runs that involve several stops for loading and unloading in a day.
 - Long distance runs where a driver might want to stretch out their day so they feel less rushed.
 - Charter bus routes where drivers spend a great deal of time waiting for passengers.

Although it was not the specific mandate of the research to discuss the value of introducing new hours of service regulations, participants in several cities (particularly Vancouver, Montreal and Moncton) wanted to voice their views on this subject. The main concern that they expressed was that both options restrict their ability to control their workday and make decisions about when to rest and how much rest they should get.

Research Observations

Proposed Changes

“They’ve been talking about it for a long time ... that’s all I know.”

“I think they’re probably going to bring us more in line with the States.”

Most drivers were aware that changes to the rules governing hours of service for commercial drivers are currently being reviewed. However, few drivers knew anything specific about the changes are being considered.

A few drivers indicated that they are under the assumption that the new rules will be similar to those adopted by the United States.

Only two of the participating drivers had heard about any specific details about the changes under consideration:

- Prior to attending the focus group session, a driver in Montreal had been told about the options under consideration by his employer.
- A driver in Moncton had recently read an article in *Atlantic Trucking* magazine on the hours of service issue.

Description of 16-Hour and 18-Hour Window

The following descriptions of the 16-hour and 18-hour window options were given to participants.

- The first proposal divides a 24-hour day up as follows:
 - At least 8 consecutive hours must be devoted to core rest.
 - A maximum of 14 hours can be spent on-duty, of which a maximum of 13 hours can be driving time.
 - The 2 remaining hours are off-duty time in each shift.
- The second proposal is based on a 26-hour day, instead of a 24 hour day, and divides the day up as follows:
 - At least 8 consecutive hours must be devoted to core rest.
 - A maximum of 14 hours can be spent on-duty, of which a maximum of 13 hours can be driving time.
 - The 4 remaining hours are off-duty time in each shift.

Participants were also told that under each option, the following maximum driving times would be in place:

- 70 hours of driving in 7 days (which can be “reset” after 34 consecutive hours of rest).
- 120 hours of driving in 14 days (which can be “reset” after 72 consecutive hours of rest).

In both cases, participants were also shown spreadsheets illustrating two possible ways a driver could operate under each option (copies are appended to this report).

Participants easily understood the options presented, and how each might affect the way they work. Specific exceptions to the rules under consideration were not discussed in detail. However, some participants asked questions such as:

- Is it possible to extend the driving window if time is spent in the sleeper cab?
- Will it be possible to “average” driving time over two days?
- Can on-duty time be extended in exceptional circumstances, such as bad weather?

With regard to the 18-hour window specifically, participants asked:

- Is it possible to start your day with the intention of working under the 16-hour window, and then revert to the 18-hour window if a driver encounters delays?

Comparisons of 16-Hour and 18-Hour Window

After the concepts were presented to drivers, they were asked to give their views on the pros and cons for each option.

Positive Aspects of 16-Hour Window

The main perceived benefits of the 16-hour window option were as follows:

- It allows drivers to finish their workday faster, and return home sooner.
- Drivers would not have as much down time to fill during their day; and
- Employers, shippers, and receivers would not be as likely to saddle drivers with delays that they would be forced to log as rest time.

Other benefits mentioned were as follows:

- It allows owner-operators, and drivers paid by the kilometre, to earn money over a shorter period of time.
- It fits with the 24-hour clock, which means it is easier to understand and more easily matches a person's natural 24-hour rhythm.
- It's not far off current rules, so it should be relatively easy for drivers and the rest of the industry to adapt.
- 8 hours of consecutive rest, coupled with 2 hours rest in the shift, should be more than adequate for most drivers.

Negative Aspects of 16-Hour Window

The perceived negative implications of the 16-hour window were as follows:

- Some loads and routes will not fit with the 16-hour window (particularly routes that involve several stops in a day).
- Normal delays caused by shippers and receivers will frequently prevent drivers from achieving 13-hours of driving in the 16-hour window.

Positive Aspects of 18-Hour Window

The main perceived benefits of the 18-hour window option were as follows:

- It will allow extra rest time for those drivers who need more rest
 - Though it should be noted very few participants felt they personally would require this extra rest time.
- Drivers, who might normally work under the 16-hour window, could revert to the 18-hour window if they encountered delays.
- This option could work better in certain circumstances, for example:
 - LTL (less than a truck load) runs that involve several stops for loading and unloading in a day.
 - Long distance runs, where a driver might want to stretch out their day so they feel less rushed.
 - Bus drivers (particularly charter bus drivers) who typically spend a great deal of time waiting for passengers.

Other benefits mentioned were as follows:

- It would be easier to keep logbooks that adhered to the rules (or at least make it appear drivers have adhered to the rules).
- It would be better for shippers and receivers, who can “request” drivers take “rest” time if there are any delays.
- It gives day cab drivers the chance to stretch out their day if they desire (in the same way sleeper cab drivers can stretch out their day if they are in the sleeper bunk).

Negative Aspects of 18-Hour Window

The perceived negative implications of the 18-hour window are as follows:

- It's a longer working day for drivers, which means more time on the road and less time at home resting or with family.
- The extra 2 hours of rest in the working window would not be truly restful.
- Employers, shippers and receivers will not be as motivated to reduce delays.
- Employers, shippers and receivers would put pressure on drivers to record delays, which are not fault of the driver, as rest time.
- Total of 12 hours of rest is too much down time for drivers (especially if driver is on the road, and not at home).
- The longer workday will be more tiring to drivers.
- Falsification of the logs will be easier, as the driver has more hours to "play" with.
- A 26-hour day is not as logical as a 24-hour day and it does not fit with a person's natural rhythms.
- The extended workday could result in drivers getting fewer full days off.
- Owner-operators and drivers paid by the kilometer will have to work longer hours to make money.

Examination of Specific Issues

After participants had a chance to discuss what they perceive to be the pros and cons of each option, they were asked about the impact of these options in four key areas: road safety, road transportation productivity, enforcement and administration, and driver working conditions and lifestyle.

Road Safety

“There’s nothing restful about sitting at a loading dock waiting to get unloaded.”

“There are a lot more things you need to attend to at home than on the road.”

“Once you’ve got your 5 or 6 hours of sleep in, you’re raring to go. You don’t want to sit around waiting.”

On balance, participants felt that the 18-hour window would cause more fatigue for drivers than the 16-hour window. This is mainly because few expected that the 4-hours of rest, to be taken within the 18-hour window, would be truly restful.

When asked to comment on whether the 8 consecutive hours of rest required under both options is adequate, drivers made a clear distinction between spending this rest time at home versus spending it on the road. When they are on the road, drivers only need to eat, wash, and sleep during this time. When they are at home, their rest time must also include: driving to and from home, doing household chores, and spending time with their family. As such, most are of the opinion that 8 hours of rest is adequate when at home, and few are of the opinion it is not adequate. In contrast, most believe 8 hours of consecutive rest on the road is excessive, with just a few believing it is “about right”.

The vast majority of participants indicated that they require between 5 and 7 hours sleep to feel properly rested. When they are on the road, many would find it hard to occupy themselves for the extra 1 to 3 hours that needs to elapse before they can begin driving again.

Road Transportation Productivity

“Nothing’s really going to change until they feel it in their pockets.”

“The shippers and receivers have no respect for drivers.”

“If you say “no”, they’ll find someone else who will do the work.”

“Companies know they have to treat drivers well to keep them.”

Participants indicated that there is a great deal of inefficiency in the supply chain, which results in frequent delays for drivers. Although a limited working window would offer some incentive for shippers and receivers to be more efficient, most participants do not believe there would be significant improvements in productivity unless other measures are taken (such as fining clients who make drivers wait for an unreasonable amount of time).

Many worry productivity will fall under both the 16-hour and 18-hour window, as they believe drivers will regularly be forced to stop driving before reaching their intended destinations.

When asked if they felt their employers or clients would allow them to work less than the maximum limits, if that is what they preferred to do, opinions were divided. Some participants (particularly in Moncton) felt they would risk losing their job or contracts if they were to say “no”. However, other participants (particularly in Calgary) felt the current lack of drivers in the industry gave them some negotiating power where employers and clients are concerned.

Enforcement and Administration

“You can’t make a living in this business and keep accurate logs.”

“You make the driving you’ve done fit the regulations.”

“If you get held up, for whatever reason, your boss is going to expect you to

Participants admit that logbooks rarely reflect the actual driving they do. Only those drivers who run specific routes, which can be easily accomplished within the current rules, say they keep accurate logs. For others, it is common practice to make the logbooks “look” correct, even if their day did not precisely follow the regulations.

It was expected that logbook falsification would occur under both the 16-hour and 18-hour windows. However, most agreed that the 18-hour window gave drivers more flexibility in “fixing” their log. As well, most agreed that employers, shippers and receivers would pressure drivers to report time spent working (for instance waiting in line to load or unload, or in traffic) as rest time.

Driver Working Conditions and Lifestyle

“Lifestyle! What lifestyle? We’re truck drivers.”

We’re away from home so much that we’re going to prefer anything that gets us home sooner.”

The trucker’s lifestyle is not an optimum one. Many participants indicated that they have been divorced, and must spend long periods away from their children. While the norm in society is a 40 hour work week, the typical truck driver works in excess of 60 hours a week. Furthermore, severe weather, road construction, bad drivers, demanding employers and clients, lack of respect from shippers, curfews, infrequent and inadequate rest areas, lack of exercise, and poor diet all contribute to a stressful working environment.

Neither the 16-hour nor 18-hour options are expected to greatly improve the working conditions or lifestyle of drivers. However, when asked to choose between the two, most felt that the 16-hour window would work best for them – mainly because it allows them to complete their work and return to their life and family more quickly.

Preference Between 16-Hour and 18-Hour Window

Once participants had thoroughly discussed each option under consideration, they were asked to choose the one they would prefer to see adopted. The clear preference of participants was the 16-hour window, as approximately 8 in 10 participants chose this option.

As stated earlier, the main reasons given for preferring the 16-hour window were as follows:

- It allows drivers to finish their workday faster, and return home sooner.
- Drivers would not have as much down time to fill during their day; and
- Employers, shippers, and receivers would not be as likely to saddle drivers with delays that they would be forced to log as rest time.

Overall Concerns

“I’m the best judge of when I’m tired and when I’m not.”

“When you’ve got time on your hands, you end up doing things like hanging out at bars, playing VLTs, and smoking.”

“When you’ve got a load to deliver, you get all keyed up waiting around. You’re worried that waiting is going to cause you to hit bad weather or traffic.”

“What’s so tiring about sitting in a comfortable seat in an air-conditioned truck cab?”

Although it was not a specific mandate of the research to discuss the value of introducing new hours of service regulations, participants in several cities (particularly Vancouver, Montreal and Moncton) wanted to express their views on this subject.

The main concern participants expressed was that both the 16-hour window and the 18-hour window restrict their ability to control their workday, and make decisions about when they should rest and how much rest they should get.

As mentioned previously, most drivers do not feel they need a full 8 hours off to be sufficiently rested – especially when they are on the road. Many say they can’t sleep for the full 8 hours and find it difficult to fill the excess time.

Filling excess time is even more difficult when drivers are in remote areas where full service truck stops are not always closeby. In fact, drivers report encountering long stretches where roadside stops only allow for 30 minute stays.

Participants also took issue with the fact that both options appear to be based on the premise that driving is tiring and other activity is not. In fact, most participants felt that driving is one of the least tiring or stressful activities of their day. Loading and unloading, securing tarps, and dealing with uncooperative shippers and receivers are all seen as more tiring activities than driving a modern, well-equipped transport truck.

The U.S. Situation

“Once your 10 hours of rest is up, you push yourself as hard as you can for 14 hours.”

“If you’re the type who wants a long lunch break or a nap, you can’t afford to do that.”

“Since most drivers are on the same schedule, rest stops fill up quickly, so it can be difficult to find a place to stop.”

Approximately one-third of the participants had experience operating under U.S. hours of service rules. These participants understand the U.S. rules to be as follows: once a driver begins his day, he has 14 hours to work. Once 14 hours has elapsed, he must stop for 10 consecutive hours.

The general consensus is that these rules do not necessarily contribute to greater road safety, as they encourage drivers to push themselves to do as much driving as possible within the 14-hour window. The rules discourage drivers from taking breaks during the day if they feel fatigued or stopping for proper meals.

Drivers also have difficulty adhering to these rules, as it is not always easy to find an acceptable place to stop for 10 hours once their 14 hours of work time has elapsed.

Since these rules came into place, they report that companies and drivers have had to make adjustments, such as:

- Using two drivers on certain runs instead of one.
- Changing switch-points, so drivers can make it back to Canada before the 14-hour window ends.
- Choosing different border crossings to maximize the driving time in Canada.

Awareness of CCMTA

"I've heard the name before, but that's all."

At the beginning of each session, participants were asked if they were aware of the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA). A small number indicated that they had heard of CCMTA (about one-third), but apart from hearing the name before, few knew anything about CCMTA or its function.

In order that participants knew who was sponsoring the focus group sessions, they were told that ...

In fact, CCMTA is the official organization in Canada for coordinating all matters dealing with the administration, regulation and control of motor vehicle transportation and highway safety. CCMTA incorporates members from all Canadian governments (Provincial/Territorial/Federal) as well as Associate Members from transportation related organizations.

CCMTA was directed by the Council of Ministers in charge of the hours of service review to conduct an objective evaluation of the impacts of proposed changes on all stakeholders, including drivers.

Appendix A – Discussion Agenda

Hours of Service Focus Groups for CCMTA

Discussion Agenda

October 28-November 4, 2004

Introduction

As you may know, the federal, provincial and territorial governments have been reviewing the hours of service rules for commercial vehicle drivers since the early 1990's. The purpose of tonight's session is to get your input on proposed changes to the regulations, specifically the 16- and 18- hour window of elapsed time

Before we begin, I want to explain how this focus group session will work.

- It will be a "roundtable discussion". Please feel free to speak whenever you have something to say. You don't need to put your hand up. You don't need to wait for me to call on you.
- I expect that different people will have different opinions. That's okay. I just ask that you respect the opinions of others. If everyone in the group is expressing a particular opinion, but you feel differently, it is important that you let me know. Don't leave me with the impression everyone is in agreement if you are not.
- Everything you say will be kept confidential. Nothing I write in my report will be attributed to a specific person. So please speak freely.
- I am recording the conversation, but that is just to help me prepare my report. No one else will view the tapes.
- Some colleagues are observing the group. Please don't be concerned about that – they are working on this project with me.

To begin, I'd like everyone to introduce themselves, please tell me about yourself: do you have a family, how long have you been driving for a living, who you work for, what you haul, where do you travel, and what is your typical work schedule.

CCMTA

The group that is sponsoring tonight's focus group is the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators or CCMTA. Have you heard of CCMTA? What have you heard?

In fact, CCMTA is the official organization in Canada for coordinating all matters dealing with the administration, regulation and control of motor vehicle transportation and highway safety. CCMTA incorporates members from all Canadian governments (Provincial/Territorial/Federal) as well as Associate Members from transportation related organizations.

CCMTA was directed by the Council of Ministers in charge of the hours of service review to conduct an objective evaluation of the impacts of proposed changes on all stakeholders, including drivers.

Current Situation

Currently, a driver must obtain a minimum of 8 consecutive hours upon reaching 13 hours of driving or 15 hours on-duty. However, these limits can span more than a day. As well, there currently is no daily maximum driving time. So, if a driver drives 13 hours, followed by 8 consecutive hours off-duty, the driver can return to driving. With 3 hours remaining in the current day, the driver could accumulate 16 hours of driving in a 24-hour period.

Proposed Changes

What have you heard about the proposed changes? Do you know what is being proposed for driving time? Off-duty hours in each shift? On-duty non-driving time? Core rest?

Option 1 (16-hour Window)

In fact, there are two proposals under consideration. I will present one, then the other.

The first proposal divides a 24-hour day up as follows:

- At least 8 consecutive hours must be devoted to core rest.
- A maximum of 14 hours can be spent on-duty, of which a maximum of 13 hours can be driving time.
- The 2 remaining hours are off-duty time in each shift.

Here is a handout that shows different ways a driver could divide up their day under this 16-hour window. **DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT ON 16-HOUR WINDOW.**

Do you have any questions or comments? Is this what you were expecting from the changes?

Option 2 (18-hour Window)

The second proposal is based on a 26-hour day, instead of a 24 hour day, and divides the day up as follows:

- At least 8 consecutive hours must be devoted to core rest
- A maximum of 14 hours can be spent on-duty, of which a maximum of 13 hours can be driving time.
- The 4 remaining hours are off-duty time in each shift.

Do you have any questions or comments? Is this what you were expecting from the changes?

Comparison of Options

As a group, let's fill in this table. RECORD ON FLIP CHART

	Pros	Cons
Option 1 – 16-hour working window		
Options 2 – 18-hour working window		

Let's recap ... tell me specifically how each of these options affects the following. RECORD ON FLIP CHART

- Road safety
 - Which option would cause you the most fatigue?
 - Is 8 consecutive hours enough time to rest considering all the things you would do during this time (traveling to home/motel, eating, showering, etc.)? What amount of time is adequate?
- Road Transportation Productivity
 - Which option would be best for overall productivity?
 - How would you prefer to work ... would you prefer to work a even shorter hours that allowed under the regulations or would you prefer to work as much as you can, within the regulations, until the job is done?
 - Will your employer / clients allow you to work less if you want, or will they pressure you to work to the maximum limits?
 - Could your workday be shortened if efficiencies were introduced in loading or unloading, or other things that shippers or carriers could do?
- Enforcement and Administration
 - Would it be necessary to falsify your logs under each of these options? Under which option would falsification of logs be more common?
 - Are there some routes that would be especially problematic under these new regulations? Which option would present more problems for the routes you are familiar with?
- Driver working conditions and lifestyle
 - Which option would work best with your lifestyle?

The U.S. Situation

Do any of you drive in the U.S.? Are any of you familiar with the U.S. rules on hours of service?

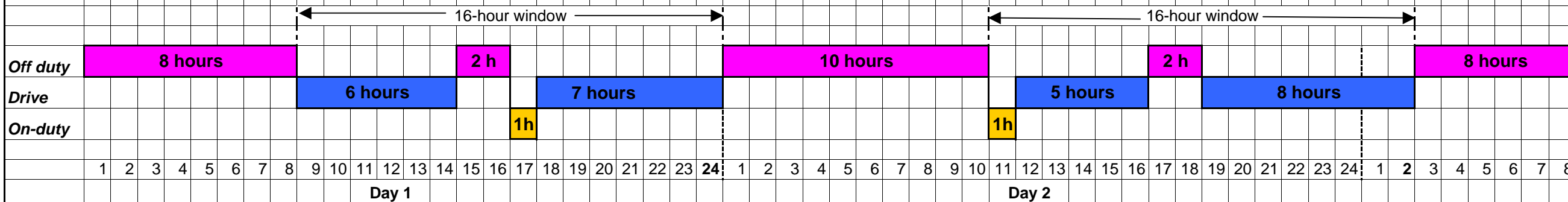
In fact, U.S. drivers must adhere to a 14-hour working window. For those of you who work for organizations that operate in the US, what strategies has your organization used to adjust to the 14-hour operating window in the U.S.?

Appendix B – Illustrations of 16- and 18-Hour Windows

Illustration of 16-hour window

In these examples, we assume the day begins at midnight.

Example A:



Example B:

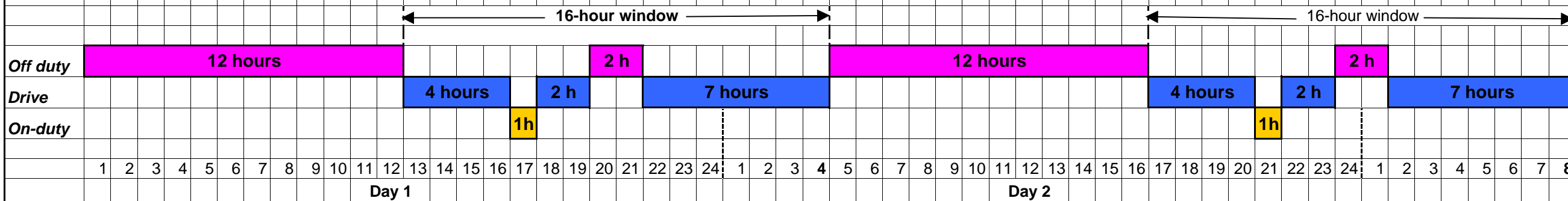
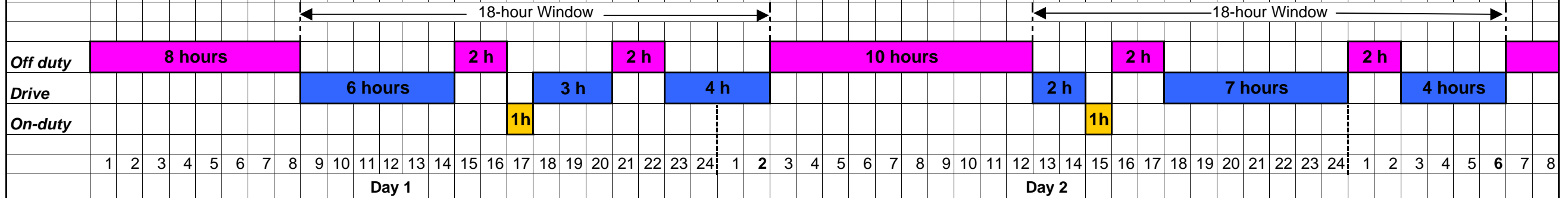


Illustration of 18-hour window

In these examples, we assume the day begins at midnight.

Example A:



Example B:

