

The Dispatch Clock Is a Safety Control

If an appointment only works after the driver edits the truth, the appointment never worked.

11 hours	14 hours	30 minutes	90 days
maximum driving inside the standard window	standard consecutive driving window	break after eight cumulative driving hours	complaint window stated on FMCSA's coercion program page

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Property-carrying drivers generally operate inside an eleven-hour driving limit and a fourteen-hour driving window after ten consecutive hours off duty.

After eight cumulative driving hours, a driver needs a consecutive thirty-minute break from driving. Weekly limits and sleeper berth rules add another layer to the route plan.

FMCSA's coercion rule reaches motor carriers, shippers, receivers, brokers, and their representatives when a request, driver objection, and threat or negative action form the prohibited sequence.

01 Build the route from the driver's actual clock

The federal guide describes three maximum duty limits that work together: the fourteen-hour driving window, the eleven-hour driving limit, and the sixty-hour or seventy-hour rolling duty limit. A load can fit the miles and still fail the available clock.

Pickup dwell, fueling, inspections, loading, unloading, and other compensated work can consume on-duty time. The desk should ask for remaining drive time and remaining window, not the vague question do you have hours.

Clock	Core rule	Desk mistake
Driving	No more than eleven driving hours after the required off-duty period	Planning from total miles without remaining drive time
Window	Driving must fit within the fourteen-hour window unless a valid rule changes the calculation	Treating a break as if it always pauses the window

Clock	Core rule	Desk mistake
Break	Thirty consecutive minutes from driving after eight cumulative driving hours	Assuming short separate stops can be combined
Weekly	No driving after sixty hours in seven days or seventy hours in eight days, as applicable	Ignoring prior work for this or another employer
Sleeper	Qualifying periods can be paired under the sleeper berth rule	Inventing a split without validating the exact periods

Evidence: Interstate Truck Driver's Guide to Hours of Service

02 Exceptions are conditions, not magic words

The short-haul exception requires a return to the work reporting location within fourteen consecutive hours, operations within a 150 air-mile radius, and employer time records, among other conditions. It does not create unlimited time.

The adverse driving conditions exception can add up to two driving hours and extend the driving window for genuinely unexpected conditions. FMCSA's guide says routine rush-hour congestion is not adverse driving. The condition must have been unknown or not reasonably knowable before dispatch or before driving resumed.

- Ask which exception applies and why.
- Write down the factual condition, not only the rule name.
- Do not use an exception to repair an appointment that was impossible when booked.
- Do not treat expected port, border, seasonal, or rush-hour delay as unexpected.

Evidence: Interstate Truck Driver's Guide to Hours of Service

03 Coercion starts after the driver objects

FMCSA's April 2026 coercion questions describe a three-part sequence. First, a carrier, shipper, receiver, or broker requests a task that would violate a covered safety regulation. Second, the driver says the task cannot be completed without the violation. Third, the requesting party threatens or takes negative action to force compliance or punish the refusal.

A threat does not need to be carried out. Pressure to falsify logs, misuse personal conveyance, exceed driving limits, move unsafe equipment, or ignore a required rest can create exposure.

1. The request is made.
2. The driver identifies the regulatory conflict.
3. The desk pauses dispatch and records the objection.
4. The schedule or operating plan is changed.
5. No one threatens the driver's job, future loads, pay, or work opportunity.
6. The revised plan and reason are saved in the load file.

Evidence: Frequently Asked Questions: Prohibited Coercion of Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers

04 Use appointment math as the control surface

The highest-leverage control is simple: make legal feasibility visible before tender. Start with the driver's current location, remaining drive time, remaining window, weekly balance, required break, realistic pickup dwell, route miles, traffic pattern, fuel, and destination appointment.

When the plan fails, the response is a new appointment, a relay, a reset, a different driver, or a declined load. The response is never pressure to relabel time.

A documented no is safer than a verbal maybe that depends on the driver absorbing the violation.

Evidence: Interstate Truck Driver's Guide to Hours of Service, Frequently Asked Questions: Prohibited Coercion of Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Put remaining drive, remaining window, and weekly balance on the dispatch screen.
2. Create a standard response when a driver raises a regulatory objection: pause, document, replan, confirm.
3. Audit appointment promises that repeatedly require adverse-condition or personal-conveyance explanations.

QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING NEXT

- Can your desk prove the appointment was feasible at the moment of tender?
- What happens operationally when a driver says the plan would violate hours?

LIMITS AND CAUTIONS

- Hours-of-service rules contain exceptions and operation-specific details. Use the current regulation and qualified compliance review for edge cases.
- The FMCSA driver guide is explanatory guidance and does not replace the regulatory text.
- This paper does not decide whether a specific communication legally constitutes coercion.

PRIMARY PUBLIC SOURCES

1. **Interstate Truck Driver's Guide to Hours of Service**
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration | 2022-04-28
2. **Frequently Asked Questions: Prohibited Coercion of Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers**
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration | 2026-04-28
3. **Coercion**
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration | current program page

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