
USDA FOREST SERVICE
ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULE GUIDELINES
JUNE 2001

Summary

This document establishes policy and guidance for the USDA Forest Service in the administration of flexible and compressed work schedules (jointly referred to as "alternative work schedules" or AWS).

Managers and Supervisors may modify these guidelines to meet specific unit needs. However, modifications should be rare and made only in unusual situations, should not be more restrictive, and may not result in increased entitlements to employees not permitted by law. *Implementation and any subsequent modification of this document shall be subject to negotiation with representatives of the Union.*

Policy

Alternative work schedules (AWS) will be used in the Forest Service for the purpose of improved productivity and greater service to the public. AWS will enable managers and supervisors to meet their program goals and, at the same time, allow employees to be more flexible in scheduling their activities.

All employees have the right to request any approved flexible or compressed work schedule, or change their hours under existing work schedules. Managers and/or Supervisors have the authority to approve individual requests, and disapprove requests when the peculiarity of the work requires

particular schedules. When any request for a particular schedule is denied, the employee will receive a written explanation of the denial.

Any work schedule that conflicts with the duties of a position, hampers its effectiveness or overall service objectives, results in reduced productivity, or increases the cost of Forest Service operations will be disapproved, discontinued, or modified.

All Forest Service offices and field operations will be adequately staffed during normal customer service hours. Business hours are established and posted at each Forest Service unit.

Basic Work Requirement

A full-time employee must work the equivalent of 80 hours/pay period.

A part-time employee must work the equivalent of no less than 32 hours nor more than 64 hours/pay period.

***Regularly Scheduled
Administrative Workweek
(RSAW)***

5 CFR 610.111 (a) (1) states "*a basic workweek of 40 hours which does not extend over more than 6 of any 7 consecutive days.*"

The regularly scheduled administrative workweek (RSAW) is the period within which an employee is regularly

scheduled to work. The normal RSAW for the USDA Forest Service is:

**Sunday – Saturday
5:00 A.M. – 10:00 P.M.**

Core Time

Core time is the days and hours during the workday and workweek during which an employee on a flexible schedule must be present for work.

The USDA Forest Service has established core days to be the middle three workdays of an employee's RSAW.

The USDA Forest Service has established core hours to be 10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Note: Employees on a maxiflex schedule must account for core time on only three workdays per workweek.

Excluding lunch periods, absences during core time must be charged to appropriate leave (e.g., annual or sick leave, comp time, credit hours, LWOP, AWOL), unless the supervisor authorizes the employee to deviate from core time hours/days and make up the absence during flexible hours in the same workday, or subsequent workdays within the pay period.

Flexible Hours (Or Flexible Time Bands)

On a flexible work schedule, flexible hours are the times during the workday, workweek, or pay period (minus core hours) during which an employee may choose to vary his or her times of arrival to and departure from the work site,

consistent with the duties and requirements of the position.

**Sunday - Saturday
5:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M.
2:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.**

Work Schedules and Established Tour of Duty

Work schedules shall normally not begin before 6:00 A.M. nor extend beyond 6:00 P.M. Exceptions based on requirements of the nature of the work (e.g., field work) may be negotiated by the local parties, and/or approved by the manager/supervisor. Each employee will designate his/her established tour of duty in Block 8 on the Time and Attendance Report.

◆ **Flexible Schedule**

Flexible schedules include Flexitour, Gliding, Variable Day, Variable Week and Maxiflex. Each full-time employee on a flexible schedule has an established tour of duty consisting of five 8-hour days per week. However, the employee may vary the number of hours worked on a given workday or each week within the set guidelines. Part-time employees have established schedules as applicable.

◆ **5-4/9 Compressed Schedule**

Each full-time employee on a compressed 5-4/9 Compressed Schedule has a fixed schedule tour of duty consisting of eight 9-hour days and one 8-hour day. Part-time employees have fixed scheduled tours with at least one 9-hour day.

◆ **4-10 Compressed Schedule**

Each full-time employee has a fixed scheduled tour of duty consisting of four 10-hour days. Part-time employees have fixed scheduled tours, of which at least one day must be a 10-hour day.

Hours worked in any one day as part of the employee's basic work requirement cannot exceed 11 1/2 hours, or in any one week 50 hours. With few exceptions, total hours worked in any one-day, including base, credit, overtime, and/or compensatory time, may not exceed 12 hours; i.e., fire.

Work schedules will start and end at 15-minute intervals (on the quarter hour). Rest breaks are included as compensated time in the basic workday. Employees who refrain from taking a scheduled 15-minute morning and afternoon rest break may not depart the work place 30 minutes before the end of the work day and record that time as work hours.

On any workday of 8 hours or more, employees are expected to observe a minimum half-hour noncompensable meal break (after first 5 or 6 hours). Supervisors should decide when the 1/2-hour noncompensable meal break is to occur, but at the supervisor's discretion the employee can make this determination.

Upon supervisory approval, any employee may choose to "flex" his/her work schedule and work between 5:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M., or 6:00 P.M. and 10:00 P.M. These hours will be coded to TC 01 or TC 29. Union officials performing union-related duties may code this time to TC 37 or TC 38. These

hours are not part of the RSAW, and night differential will not be paid.

When on training assignments, employees may remain on their current alternative work schedule in those situations where the supervisor can ensure that the flexible work schedule will be completed. (Employees are entitled to at least 8 hours each day, except on the first and last day).

Time-Accounting System

Managers and/or Supervisors must certify employees' entitlement to pay, including the number of hours of duty, attendance, and the nature and length of absences. The method to record such certification will be by signature on the Time and Attendance Report, which shows starting and stopping times and periods of absences.

Overtime Work (TC 21)

◆ **All Flexible Schedules**

Overtime work is work in excess of 8 hours in a day or 40 hours in a workweek, ordered in advance by management, and performed in addition to an employee's basic work requirement.

◆ **Compressed Schedule**

Overtime work is work ordered in advance by management and is in excess of the compressed tour of duty.

Management may order an employee who is covered by a flexible or compressed work schedule to work hours that are in excess of the number of

hours the employee planned to work on a specific day (coded to TC 21 or TC 32).

Compensatory Time (TC 32)

Compensatory time off is distinguished from credit hours in that compensatory time off derives from entitlement to pay for overtime work. Entitlement to compensation in the form of credit hours derives from work performed at the option of the employee in excess of the employee's basic work requirement. Supervisors may grant compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay at the request of the employee.

Mandatory compensatory time off, in lieu of overtime pay for irregular or occasional over-time work, may be ordered for employees who are FLSA exempt and whose rate of basic pay exceeds the rate for GS-10, step 10. However, this does not apply to wage grade employees who are FLSA exempt.

Holiday Leave (TC 66)

A full-time employee on a flexible work schedule is entitled to 8 hours' pay (TC 66) for that day.

A full-time employee on a compressed work schedule is entitled to 8, 9, or 10 hours' pay (TC 66) based on his or her fixed schedule. If a holiday falls on an employee's nonworkday, the employee's preceding workday will be designated the "in lieu of" holiday.

A part-time employee on a flexible work schedule is entitled to pay for the typical, average, or scheduled number of hours of work for the holiday. If a part-time employee has maintained a reasonably

consistent schedule for several pay periods, the employee will be paid for the number of hours he or she would have worked. If a part-time employee has no typical schedule, the number of hours worked in prior weeks on days corresponding to the holiday will be averaged to determine an employee's pay entitlement for that holiday. An employee will not schedule more hours of work on a holiday than he or she scheduled in prior weeks on days corresponding to the holiday.

A part-time employee on a compressed work schedule is entitled to the number of hours scheduled to work under his or her fixed schedule.

Holiday Pay (TC 31)

◆ Flexible Work Schedule

Holiday pay (TC 31) for non-overtime work, within the regularly scheduled tour of duty, is limited to 8 hours in a day.

◆ Compressed Work Schedule

Holiday pay for nonovertime work is limited to the number of hours normally scheduled for that day.

Note: Part-time employees on both flexible and compressed schedules are not entitled to premium pay (TC 31) for work on days designated as "in lieu of" holidays for full-time employees.

Annual and Sick Leave (TC 61 & TC 62)

Use of annual leave, sick leave, and/or leave without pay must be requested by

the employee and approved by his or her supervisor in advance.

Employees must charge time off work during core hours (unless allowed by supervisor to deviate) to an appropriate leave category.

Additionally, time off during an employee's basic work requirement must be charged to the appropriate leave category: annual or sick leave (TC 61, 62,) credit hours (TC 50), compensatory time (TC 64), LWOP (TC 71), etc. The maximum amount of sick leave, annual leave, and/or leave without pay to be used by an employee working on a flexible schedule will be limited to the number of hours of his/her established tour of duty on block 8 of the Time and Attendance Report or based on the employee's pattern of work. Sick leave, annual leave, and/or leave without pay for employees on a compressed work schedule is limited to the number of hours scheduled for that day.

Where there is such variation in an employee's arrival time that there is no discernible pattern, the mathematical average of the employee's arrival time for the previous two-week period will be computed and the average arrival time used as a reference for determining leave.

Excused Absence (TC 66)

The amount of excused absence to be granted an employee working on a flexible schedule will be based on his or her typical schedule. Excused absence for employees on a compressed work schedule is limited to the number of hours scheduled for that day.

Where there is such variation in an employee's arrival time that there is no discernible pattern, the mathematical average of the employee's arrival time for the previous two-week period will be computed and the average arrival time used as a reference for determining leave.

Sunday Differential (TC 04)

A full-time employee, whose regularly scheduled tour of duty includes Sunday, will be entitled to Sunday differential pay. Any employee who performs regularly scheduled non-overtime work, a part of which is performed on Sunday, is entitled to Sunday differential pay for the entire daily tour of duty, not to exceed 8 hours.

A part-time employee is not entitled to Sunday differential pay.

Night Differential (TC 11)

If the employee's tour of duty includes 8 or more hours available for work during daytime hours (6:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.), he/she is not entitled to night pay even though they voluntarily elect to vary their arrival or departure time during hours for which night pay is normally required (6:00 P.M. - 6:00 A.M.). However, if an employee establishes a pattern of regularly working base hours between the hours of 6:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M., night differential will be paid.

Night differential will be paid if a supervisor orders and a line officer approves in writing an employee to work a tour of duty outside the hours of 6:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M. Such approvals should be rare and will not be granted to

increase an employee's entitlement to night pay or other premium pay.

An employee who performs regularly scheduled overtime work at night is entitled to night differential pay. Such time will be coded to TC 25 or TC 26, as appropriate.

Credit Hours (TC 29 Earned/TC 50 Used)

Credit hours are those hours within a flexible work schedule that an employee elects to work in excess of his or her basic work requirement to extend a workday or workweek. Employees working on compressed work schedules may not earn credit hours.

Credit hours are considered hours of work and may be earned only at times that would be otherwise compensable under existing federal pay laws and pay regulations.

Management cannot order an employee to work credit hours. Credit hours are worked at the option of the employee. Management may not adjust an employee's alternate work schedule for the purpose of avoiding overtime or other premium pay or additional compensation, and will not ask employees to earn or use credit hours to avoid paying overtime.

Credit hours may not be used by an employee to increase his or her entitlement to overtime pay.

Credit hours may be worked (earned) on Sunday through Saturday, between 5:00 A.M. - 10:00 P.M.

Employees are not entitled to night differential, or any other premium pay, if they choose to, and do, work credit hours outside the flexible time bands (5:00 A.M. - 6:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.).

Credit hours may not be worked on holidays.

Credit hours may not be earned in conjunction with travel. See Travel Section below.

A maximum of 24 hours may be carried over from one pay period to another under flexible work schedules.

If an employee is no longer subject to a flexible work schedule, the employee must be paid for accumulated credit hours at his or her current base rate of pay. Payment for accumulated credit hours is limited to not more than 24 hours for a full-time employee, and for a part-time employee, not more than one-quarter of the employee's biweekly work requirement.

Travel

Employees shall be compensated for Travel Time as authorized under Title 5 and FLSA. Normally, employees will not be expected to travel without being eligible for compensation. However, if an employee is expected to travel on Government business without entitlement to compensation, he/she will be notified in advance and given the reason(s).

An employee may not earn credit hours for travel because travel in connection with Government work is not voluntary in nature. Travel does not meet the

definition of credit hours in that credit hours are hours within a flexible work schedule in excess of an employee's basic work requirement that the employee elects to work so as to vary the length of a work day or work week.

Travel During Regular Work Hours

An employee working a flexible schedule will be compensated for hours spent traveling within his/her established regularly scheduled administrative workweek

An employee working a compressed schedule will be compensated for hours spent traveling within his/her fixed scheduled administrative workweek.

Travel Outside Regular Work Hours

There are separate determinations for exempt and nonexempt employees under FLSA and Title 5 U.S.C.

Exempt Employees

An exempt employee working a flexible schedule will be compensated under Title 5 for hours spent traveling outside his/her established regularly scheduled administrative workweek if the travel meets one of the conditions listed below.

An exempt employee working a compressed schedule will be compensated for hours spent traveling outside his/her fixed scheduled administrative workweek if the travel meets one of the conditions listed below.

1. Involves the performance of actual work while traveling;

2. Is incident to travel that involves the performance of work while traveling;
3. Is carried out under such arduous and unusual conditions that the travel is inseparable from work; or
4. Results from an event that could not be scheduled or controlled administratively, including travel by an employee to such an event and the return of the employee to his or her official duty station. *Exceptions: 1) Attendance at professional meetings or societies; i.e., Society of American Foresters. 2) Training at an institution that conducts events solely for the benefit of the Government; i.e., USDA Graduate School courses.*

These hours are to be coded to overtime (TC 21). An employee may charge these hours to compensatory time (TC 32) at his/her request.

Nonexempt Employees

A nonexempt employee working a flexible schedule will be compensated under Title 5 or FLSA, whichever gives the employee the greater benefit, for hours spent traveling outside his/her regularly scheduled administrative workweek if the travel meets one of the conditions listed below.

A nonexempt employee working a compressed schedule will be compensated for hours spent traveling outside his/her fixed scheduled administrative workweek, if the travel meets one of the conditions listed below.

Title 5

1. Involves the performance of actual work while traveling;
2. Is incident to travel that involves the performance of work while traveling;
3. Is carried out under such arduous and unusual conditions that the travel is inseparable from work; or
4. Results from an event that could not be scheduled or controlled administratively including travel by an employee to such an event and the return of the employee to his or her official duty station. *Exceptions: 1) Attendance at professional meetings or societies; i.e., Society of American Foresters. 2) Training at an institution that conducts events solely for the benefit of the Government; i.e., USDA Graduate School courses.*

FLSA

1. Is required to drive a vehicle or perform other work while traveling;
2. Is required to travel as a passenger on a one-day assignment away from the official duty station; or
3. Is required to travel on an overnight assignment during hours on nonworkdays that correspond to the employee's regular working hours.

These hours are to be coded to overtime (TC 21). An employee may charge these hours to compensatory time (TC 32) at his/her request.

Approved Flexible and Compressed Schedules

Flexitour

A full-time employee must work 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week, and 80 hours a pay period. The supervisor determines the number of hours a part-time employee must work in a day, in a week, or in a biweekly pay period.

Employee preselects arrival time. (This results in a fixed schedule until the next pay period.) At the request of an employee, the supervisor may approve an adjusted arrival time for subsequent pay periods.

Credit hours are not earned on a Flexitour schedule.

Gliding

A full-time employee must work 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week, and 80 hours a pay period.

The supervisor determines the number of hours a part-time employee must work in a day, in a week, or in a biweekly pay period.

Employee may vary arrival and departure times daily during the established flexible hours (Sunday - Saturday, 5:00 A.M. - 10:00 P.M.).

Credit hours are not earned on a Gliding schedule.

Variable Day

A full-time employee must work 40 hours a week.

A part-time employee must work no less than 16 hours or more than 32 hours per pay week.

Employee may vary the length of the workday daily within the flexible hours (Sunday - Saturday, 5:00 A.M. - 10:00 P.M.). A full-time employee must account for 10 days per pay period and must account for core time on each workday.

Credit hours may be earned.

Variable Week

A full-time employee must work 80 hours a pay period.

A part-time employee must work no less than 32 hours or more than 64 hours a pay period.

Employee may vary the length of the workweek, as well as the length of each workday. A full-time employee must account for 10 days per pay period and must account for core time on each workday.

Credit hours may be earned.

Maxiflex

A full-time employee must work 80 hours a pay period.

A part-time employee must work not less than 32 hours or more than 64 hours a pay period.

Employee may vary the length of the workweek, as well as the workday, daily. Employee may vary the number of days per week within the flexible work schedule (Sunday - Saturday, 5:00

A.M. - 10:00 P.M.). Employee must account for core time on three workdays per workweek.

Credit hours may be earned.

Compressed 5-4/9

A full-time employee must work nine 9-hour days and one 8-hour day in a pay period.

Employee will select, with supervisory approval, his/her "off" day and "short" day.

The supervisor determines the number of hours a part-time employee must work in a day, in a week, or in a biweekly pay period.

Credit hours are not earned on a compressed schedule.

Compressed 4-10

A full-time employee must work eight 10-hour days in a pay period. Employee will select, with supervisory approval, his/her "off" days.

The supervisor determines the number of hours a part-time employee must work in a day, in a week, or in a biweekly pay period.

Credit hours are not earned on a compressed schedule.