



Owner-Operator's Business
Association of Canada
Association professionnelle des
routiers autonomes du Canada

*...from the
director's chair*

Wasted days & wasted nights: 30 hours per week lost



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Now that Canada's Hours of Service rules are a fait accompli, we can start doing the math to see how much compliance is going to cost us.

As you know by now, not much will change with the new rules, save for the reset provision (hooray), and the 16-hour elapsed-time rule. It's like the U.S. 14-hour rule, but a bit more forgiving.

When the new rule is in place this time next year, we'll have a limit on the length of the workday, and that's not such a bad idea. But in situations where drivers spend a lot of time sitting around, it could have quite an impact on your available driving hours.

For example, you're allowed to be on-duty for 14 hours, and you can drive for up to 13 of those hours, but you won't be allowed to drive after 16 hours have elapsed since you started your work shift. So say you spend three hours loading – you've just shortened the available hours you have left to drive in that shift to 11. Three fewer driving hours in a shift – what do you think that's going to cost you?

But wait a sec – it's only costing you if you're giving your time away, gratis.

If you're getting paid for that delay time, you could be making more money with your truck parked at the loading dock than running three hours down the road, burning fuel and wearing out the tires.

Yet unpaid waiting time continues to be one of the most contentious issues in the industry.

American statistics from the late 1990s suggested that drivers were giving away as much as 33 to 43 hours every week to unpaid,

legally prescribed, on-duty time, and numbers from OBAC's ongoing survey suggest it's not a whole lot better more than a decade later.

Those wasted days and nights are made possible only because drivers have become accustomed to making that unpaid time invisible by logging it on the top line of the logbook rather than the bottom.

I get a ton of calls complaining about HoS – a lot of drivers are frustrated because with the new rules in the U.S., it's getting more difficult to make the necessary adjustments to their logs – and it won't get easier when our new rules kick in Jan. 1, 2007.

Maybe it's time for an attitude change – instead of wasting time and energy trying to figure out how to beat the system, why not take advantage of the opportunity to get this issue out in the open and deal with it?

Take a few minutes to do the math – it just might shock you into action.

If you're dropping 30 or more hours a week from your logbook, you could be leaving a huge chunk of change on the table.

What do you figure your time is worth? Fifty bucks an hour? Eighty-five? Multiply that by 30 hours a week, 50 weeks a year, and you'll see what I mean.

I know there's a bunch of you saying there's no way to recover that time, and that I'm nuts to think it will ever change; if that's the way you want to look at it, don't call me when you're desperate for dough to make a truck payment or fix your transmission.

If there's no cost to the carrier to leaving

you sitting all day, they won't be in any hurry to move you out, or bill the customer for the delay.

If, on the other hand, someone is paying for the time they keep you hanging around, it's amazing how fast a load can come off a trailer.

And if it doesn't move, well, what the heck. You're still being paid for your time. Either way, you win.

The same applies to the call-me-back-in-15 minutes routine; if you'll sit for free, where's the incentive to get you moving?

Create the incentive by logging the time on-duty.

If your hours evaporate by Wednesday or Thursday, it won't be long 'till someone starts wondering where all the truck drivers went.

Ditto for those times there's a problem with the paperwork at Customs. How many of you have spent the night chasing all over the place trying to fix the problem so you can make the scheduled delivery? Come morning, the delivery happens as planned and you've fixed the log to make those hours disappear. But you've also made the problem disappear; you've fixed it at your expense, and no one's the wiser.

Time is money, as they say – your time, your money. Put a dollar figure on it, and start collecting. And if you're an owner/op, at the very least, start billing. Even if the carrier or customer rolls their eyes and chucks the invoice in the trash can, you can write it off as a bad debt come tax time.

Make it your New Year's resolution. Run compliant, and laugh all the way to the bank.