

Comparison of the existing 4/4/6 & 48/96 with the new 4/8 proposal (Adapted from Summer 2017 FireWire Edition. Author: Joe Barna)

FLSA and Pattern Comparision

The FLSA period for all 3 schedules are unaffected. They all rotate within a 24 day FLSA period. Here are the 24 day patterns for each schedule (O= On duty, X= Off duty):

4/4/6

**O X O X O X O X X X X
O X O X O X O X X X X X X**

48/96

**O O X X X X O O X X X X
O O X X X X O O X X X X**

4/8

**O O X X O O X X X X
O O X X O O X X X X X X X X**

Examining the Pattern

Using the 31-day month of March 2017, let's count the number of days worked versus days of rest for each schedule: 4/4/6 and 48/96 we total 11 days on duty and 20 off. For the 4/8 we total 10 days and 21 off. The totals per year for each schedule are 120 not counting extra or mandatory staffing shifts worked.

So, the real issue comes down to how the schedules are laid out. How many days in a row will we be assigned? How many in a row will we have off? Using the same month of March, on the 4/4/6 we have one set of four days off and one set of six off, separated by three stretches of seven days alternating between 24 hours on/24 hours off.

Over the same time period on the 48/96 we have five sets of four days off, separated by five sets working 48 hours straight.

Over the same time period on the 4/8 we have two sets of four days off and one set of eight days off, separated by 2 blocks of two days off.

If we leave Mandatory Staffing out of the equation for just a moment, the simplified result is that on the 4/4/6 we get one stretch of four days off and one stretch of six days off, plus a total of seven single off-days in between our assigned shifts; on the 48/96 we get five sets of four days off; on the 4/8 we get two stretches of four days off, one 8 day off, plus 2 sets of two days. The conclusion is that we get more days off in a row on the 48/96 but on the 4/4/6 we get one six-day break per month and on the 4/8 we get one eight-day break per month.

Time on/off simplified –

4/4/6: 1 four day off, 1 six day off, 7 single

48/96: 5 sets of two on, 5 sets of four off

4/8: 2 four days off, 1 eight day off, 2 two days off

Blocks of days off per year –

4/4/6: 15 four days, 15 six days

48/96: 60 four days

4/8: 15 four days, 15 eight days, 30 two days

Finally, one other consideration for some is that with the 48/96 and 4/8 there is a higher probability of getting more full weekends off every month.

Weekends off per year for 2018 (will usually vary by one weekend off from year to year)-

4/4/6: 17

48/96: 26

4/8: 25

Commute Considerations

For those who drive any considerable distance, with the 4/4/6 one may travel, counting back and forth, 20 times per month if working just regular shifts; on the 48/96 and 4/8 one would likely drive 10 times to and from work per month. Thus with the latter schedules, there would be a likely decrease in number of holdover hours per month.

Commute days:

4/4/6: 20

48/96: 10

4/8: 10

Taking Leave

Lets take some days off work for vacation! This is where things start to get more subjective, so we'll use the best case scenario for each schedule. Let's start with the 4/4/6, which affords that glorious once-monthly six-day off-duty stretch. If we utilize holiday or vacation leave covering just one shift on either end of the on-duty/off-duty cycle, the result is an eight-day break. With

the 48/96, taking any one shift off leaves us with a five day break. With the 4/8, utilizing one day off on your eight day results in nine days off.

With both the 4/4/6 and 48/96 schedules, taking two shifts off can potentially afford us a 10-day stretch off-duty; with the 4/8, taking two shifts off can result in a 12-day stretch off duty.

The one difference is that with the 4/4/6 and 4/8, only during our six-day or eight-day break is there a chance at an extension to 10 or 12, where as on the 48/96, taking leave over any of your five regularly-scheduled monthly "48s" creates a 10-day break.

Meanwhile, burning four leave days on 4/4/6 affords us 17 days off; on the 48/96, burning the same amount of leave would offer 16; and on the 4/8 it would increase to 18.

One day off:

4/4/6: 8 off

48/96: 5 off

4/8: 9 off

Two days off:

4/4/6: 10 off

48/96: 10 off

4/8: 12 off

Four days off:

4/4/6: 17

48/96: 16

4/8: 18

Eight days off:

4/4/6: 30

48/96: 28

4/8: 32

Mandatory Staffing

There are so many different ways to arrange one's voluntary extra shifts that it is difficult to directly compare the two schedules. Advocates for the 4/4/6 often point out that on that schedule, we can sign up to work extra shifts during any of the seven aforementioned monthly off-days that occur between our on-duty days and still enjoy unadulterated four- and six-day breaks. However, it is also possible to get similar results on the 48/96 and 4/8. Let's examine the schedule for a firefighter who typically works an average of two mandatory staffing days per pay period, or roughly four per month. To accomplish this on the 4/4/6 while keeping clear the four- and six-day breaks, our firefighter would have to work four 72-hour stretches over that month.

On the 48/96, to reach a goal of working four extra shifts in a month, one could arrange it to be on duty for two 96-hour stretches per month, which would leave three sets of four-day breaks and two sets of two days off. There is also the option on the 48/96 to arrange your voluntary extra shifts so that you're working four 72-hour stretches per month instead of two 96's, which would offer one set of four days off and three sets of three days off.

On the 4/8 with four days of Ot per month, there are a few creative ways to protect your eight day. You can work 4 72's or 2 96's, however this would require you to narrow your four day to two. There is also a possibility to save the 4 day or trim to a 3 day and slice the eight day into a 7 or 6 day.

Overtime days with 4 Ot's per month-

4/4/6:

Can place in rotation to protect 4 or 6 day with 72 hour stretches

48/96:

Can work two 96's for 3 four days, or work four 72's for 1 four day

4/8:

Can work 72's in rotation to protect 4 or 8 day. Will also need to add day into a 4 or 8 day rotation, but can still maintain a 3 day, 6 day, or 7 day if working a 96. Adding two on the ends of the four day protects the 8 day.

Force Hires

We have not discussed forced extra shifts for the simple fact that, while they have sadly, frustratingly, become an expected part of our schedule, they are still not wholly predictable. Therefore, there is no real fair or easy way to compare the two schedules as regards this factor. We only hope that in the future this will be less of an issue.

Relief

With the 4/4/6, each day brings a new set of bodies for relief of recalls and force hires. Both 48/96 and 4/8 do not afford the same option, however this can be accomplished by staggering the shifts in different divisions. For example only: Div 1, 2, and 3 (Valley and Mountains) C shift could start their rotation on Jan 1 and Div 4, 5, and 6 (Deserts) C shift would start their rotation on Jan 2. If the direction is to move forward with the staggering, it would be best to use a 3 or 5 day difference to offset the 8 days between divisions.