



## 48/96 Schedule Exploration

### Introduction

On September 8th, 2024, a motion was brought before the General Assembly requesting the KMFFA Elected Board gather information about the 48/96 schedule, discuss the possibility of doing a trial period, draft a SOG, and report back to the membership with their findings, and suggest a trial date, and then hold a vote. That motion passed. In response, a 48/96 committee was created (Westman, Sellers, C. Rood, Perrin, Yager, Beaty, Winn) to research other departments transitioning from our current (Kelly) schedule to the 48/96 schedule. The committee was specifically made up of members with conflicting opinions on the proposed schedule and who shared the common goal of ensuring that the membership and administration would be well educated on the 48/96 work schedule and that all information within this document is fair, balanced, truthful, and verifiable.

All of the surveyed research conducted by other Fire Departments found that in every case, the 48/96 schedule was brought to management by labor. Reasons for departments wanting a trial ranged from fewer commutes, more time away from work, housing costs, a larger hiring pool, productivity, more weekends off, and increased morale. In all cases, a trial run was 6-12 months long and offered an “escape clause” that allowed an immediate trial opt-out. This committee does not recommend a trial period without this clause.

Rural Metro Fire Knox County currently works what is referred to as The Kelly Schedule (XoXoXoooo) with three platoons. This can be easily confused with The Kelly Day Schedule, a 24/48 (XooXoo) schedule with a Kelly Day falling on the 9th day. There have been many other names for The Kelly Schedule, such as 3 / 4, the 9-day, The Berkley, California Swing, etc. This article will use The Kelly Schedule represented as XoXoXoooo and the 48/96 schedule represented as XXoooo.

In our research of a 48/96 trial period, it was clear that some of the members were highly in favor of or against the trial period. During this process, we ask you to respect each other’s position on the subject, who may not be in the same situation as yourself. This article is meant to assist each member in decision-making and understand a trial period's advantages and disadvantages. While we acknowledge there is no perfect schedule, it should be stated that the KMFFA Elected Board remains neutral, is neither for nor against the 48/96 trial, and will follow the membership’s decision.

This article is divided into four categories: time, cost, communication, & fatigue. We believe that most of the pros and cons fall into one of these and did our best to organize them in such a way. Each pro and con was debated on both sides with the information provided by the research.

## Time

The biggest pro of the 48/96 schedule is the 96 hours off every 48 hours. The biggest con to the schedule is working for 48 hours straight. RMF currently has a lot of employees who work 48 hours or more continuously but also have employees who only work their 10 days a month. Most of the data collected depends on how you spend your off days, your weekends, and your priorities.

As seen in the comparisons with the charts below, a 48/96 schedule would provide you with 20 more 4-day breaks each year. This means that you could potentially pick up 20 extra shifts a year and still have the same number of 4-day breaks as you currently have. If you choose not to pick up additional shifts, this means 20 more 4 days of leisure time to do as you please.

More 4-day breaks each year means more quality time away from work. Research has shown that more extended periods away from work allow firefighters to “check out” and focus on life away from work (see West Metro Fire Survey), reducing stress and fatigue. More 4-day breaks offer the ability to have uninterrupted productivity with projects at home and childcare. The current schedule allows for 24 hours between every 24 hours, which some may see as enough time to recharge and help at home and see the extra 4-day periods as non-beneficial.

The Kelly Schedule requires firefighters to wake up three out of nine days and drive to work. Along with waking up and driving to work, firefighters are also required to wake up and drive home three out of nine days. That is six out of nine days, waking up early and driving to and from work. The 48/96 requires firefighters to wake up one out of six days to drive to work. It also requires firefighters to wake up one out of six days to drive home. That is two out of every six days, waking up and driving to and from work. This means more mornings at home with family and spouses or just sleeping in.

The 48/96 schedule offers more full weekends off and quality time with friends and family. Because you would have more weekends off, the schedule syncs up better with friends and families who work Monday through Friday jobs. It would also allow participation in weekend activities with friends and families, such as dance recitals, basketball, baseball, football tournaments/games, and social events.

The Kelly schedule rotation requires working the same day for three weeks straight with a six-week break, and the 48/96 requires working two of the same days for two weeks with a four-week break.

While you will receive more full weekends off each year with the 48/96, you must work 9-Saturday/Sunday 48-hour shifts each year. The Kelly Schedule has zero of these and will never will. Those who are savvy with their vacation time could combat this issue depending on how many vacation days and seniority they are allotted and the importance of being off on the weekends.

## Cost

The Kelly Schedule offers three different pay periods. Each platoon will experience twelve four-day pay periods, eleven five-day pay periods, and three six-day pay periods each year. The 48/96 schedule decreases four-day pay periods to eight a year, increases the five-day pay periods to 18 a year,

and eliminates six-day pay periods. The 48/96 pay periods would repeat a five-day, five-day, and four-day (5,5,4) throughout the year. The Kelly Schedule pay periods are a repeat of 6,4,5,4,5,5,4,5,4. This is only beneficial to those wanting a more consistent paycheck.

The 48/96 schedule reduces the number of round trips required to drive each month from 10 to five. This would effectively save money on fuel costs and wear and tear on your vehicles and cut the time spent sitting behind a windshield in half. On top of saving in fuel costs and vehicle maintenance, crews can purchase food for two days straight and save in bulk with your crew.

With the continued rise in housing costs in Knox County, the 48/96 schedule would allow members to live further away due to the fewer commutes required and open options to more affordable housing. It would also increase the area for the hiring pool and increase RMF staffing, reducing mandatory shifts. However, with more staffing comes the trade-off of less overtime for those seeking it. Research has also shown that management had a more challenging time calling firefighters back to work who live further away for mandatory.

Families that have court-appointed custody childcare would have to adjust with the court. This would cost them money and time. Contrary to that, some families with shared child custody would reduce the number of times the children would have to be swapped back and forth and cut down communication with their exes.

In our research, there appeared to be an argument for fewer sick days taken with the 48/96. Further research found conflicting studies that showed a decrease in sick time initially and increased sick time usage eventually. Because of that, it has been deemed inconclusive in our report.

## **Communication**

A benefit of the 48/96 schedule is showing up for each of your 48-hour shifts, and the station and apparatus are the crew's responsibility for 48 hours straight with no disruption. This would allow each crew to set up your apparatus for 48 hours and not have crews changing out things during their off days or forgetting to replace items. It would also cut down on any information forgotten or overlooked during each 24-hour off day and the duplication of work. This committee recommends that no formal apparatus check be required on the 2nd 48-hour shift unless there is a change in the Officer/Engineer.

The 48/96 also has the potential to cut down on the amount of truck checks, radio checks, and narcotic hand-offs. While this is not set in stone, it does not make sense to do multiple truck checks during 48-hour shifts unless there is a change in Officer or Engineer.

Our research showed that half of upper management found the 48/96 schedule more challenging to communicate with staff. Management that works Monday through Friday found it more challenging to communicate with crews that had Saturday and Sunday shifts, potentially not having interactions with them for two weeks.

## Fatigue

Fatigue was found to be the most prominent controversial topic when discussing the 48/96 vs Kelly schedule. It was found that both schedules have the potential to increase long-term and short-term fatigue but a higher chance of reducing long-term fatigue, such as burnout. Forty-eight hours at a busy station has the potential to be exhausting and can potentially increase short-term fatigue. Higher fatigue and sleep deprivation can lead to further health concerns if a crew is busy for the first 24 hours and does not have the day off like The Kelly Schedule. A fatigue SOG should lay out how to combat these issues.

In some circumstances, firefighters with a busy first 24-hour shift could make up the rest on the second 24-shift and get paid to do so instead of using their off day. This would vary by station and call volume. RMF Knox County's busiest station runs an average of 6 calls a shift, with 1.5 of those calls being dispatched between 23:00 – 07:00, according to 2024 First Due data.

A SOG received from RMF Maricopa showed that crews who lose more than 3 hours of sleep during the night can move to less busy stations for the second 24-hour shift. RMF Maricopa has two stations that average 16 calls a shift. Since they adopted the 48/96 schedule on January 1st of 2024, no firefighter or crew has elected to move stations for rest. This committee agrees there is a need for a “no joy” clause that allows crews to move to slower stations after a busy first 24-hour shift at their discretion.

The SIGNA VITAE study, alongside The American College of Surgeons, concluded that Firefighters from a large urban fire department who switched from The Kelly Schedule to the 48/96 saw improved sleep quality and daytime function after switching with a reduction in burnout. It also enhanced professional and personal well-being after implementing the 48/96 schedule. The study showed no adverse effects on health and well-being but acknowledges the need for further studies on diet and exercise.

Dr. Joel Billings and Dr. Will Focht concluded in a subsequent study that sleep patterns and quality of sleep were significantly better in the 48/96 than in the Kelly Schedule, and participants reported more consistent sleep patterns. Those currently on the Kelly Schedule would have to wait 6 days to return to normal sleep versus the 2 days with the 48/96. They also suggested and advocated that later start times would improve the outcome of The Kelly schedule.

For the firefighters sitting in the third seat, the possibility of floating in the middle of your 48-hour shift adds to the fatigue of moving from station to station. There could be a need to change the current floating chart to reduce the amount of movement.

To fill mandatory shifts, it would be suggested by this committee that no firefighter should be forced to work a 72-hour shift non-voluntarily. That means that firefighters who are on their 4-day would only be subject to mandatory for the two middle days of their 4-day.

## **Conclusion**

The change to a 48/96 work schedule may constitute a significant life change for the membership. There are many factors to consider before making a decision. It is incumbent upon each individual to take the time to do their research & decide if this change will benefit in the long term. It will be up to each individual to vote to support the schedule that best fits their lifestyle.

## **Recommendation**

This committee recommends that the administration and KMFFA approve and support this document and support KMFFA in conducting a vote for a six-month trial according to their by-laws starting no earlier than January 1st, 2026. Furthermore, the committee recommends that this document be followed as a guideline for implementing the subsequent trial if the vote is successful. If the vote favors the 48/96 work schedule, the committee shall stay convened to manage the trial, collect data, conduct the 2nd vote, and draft the subsequent final report and recommendation.

## **Frequently asked questions**

### **Is a shift considered 24 or 48 hours?**

Each shift is considered 24 hours, according to our current CBA. Two 24-hour shifts with the 48/96 would be regarded as a tour.

### **What if I call in sick or take a vacation day?**

When you call in sick or take a vacation day, you only do so for 24 hours at a time. If you are sick for two days, you must call in before 19:00 the day before each shift. The current CBA requires a doctor's note after two consecutive callouts.

### **What does the first and second workday look like?**

There is an SOG attached that helps clarify what is expected on each day. Your first day should be considered your workday (x2), and your second day should be regarded as your weekend day. You are still expected to complete two days of training and duties.

### **Are the Battalion Chiefs switching schedules, too?**

That will be up to management to decide. However, this committee recommends the battalion chiefs switch to maintain consistency.

## **Will management force us to stay up after a busy 24?**

Management should allow for downtime when a crew's sleep has been interrupted. Crews should do everything possible to complete their work in their first 24 hours. RMF currently allows firefighters to rest after a long night if they are on a 48 shift.

## **What about shifts that work Christmas Eve and Christmas Day?**

This will happen 11 times in 21 years. If a shift works both days, the department will swap the 23rd with the 24th, allowing at least one of those days off.

## **What if my Battalion Chief or Officer makes us stay up after a busy shift?**

Follow the chain of command's orders and contact your union Steward immediately. If these issues arise, they will be handled at Joint Labor.

## **What about training?**

All training requirements will be held to the current CBA. It is recommended that 4 hours of training be completed on the first day.

## **Will there be a rebid before the trial starts?**

There have been no talks of a future rebid.

## **What other departments have changed to the 48/96?**

Most departments on the 48-96.com website changed from The Kelly Schedule to the 48/96 and can be viewed there. Here are a few examples: RMF Maricopa, Boise FD, OCFA, Springfield MO, Albuquerque FD, City of Sacramento, Sacramento Metro FD, West Metro Fire (Colorado), Minneapolis FD, Panama City FD, San Jose FD, and Greater Salt Lake FD. \*Oak Ridge FD trial period started 1-18-25, switching from a 24/48.

	The Kelly	48/96
Wake up at home and not travel to work	120	180
Full weekends off	18	25
Fri/Sat/Sun off	12	16
Work either Saturday or Sunday	34	18
Work both Saturday and Sunday	0	9
Round trip commutes to work per year	120	60
2 vacation days get you...	8 days	10 days
3 vacation days get you...	13	11
4 days off each year	40	60
Mornings at home	120	180
Entire weekends off	17	26
1 weekend workday per year	35	17

January Kelly						
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January 2025 48/96						
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April 2025 48/96						
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June 2025 Kelly						
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October 2025 48/96						
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November 2025 48/96						
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December 2025 Kelly						
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December 2025 48/96						
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# Standard Operating Guideline (SOG): Fire Department Daily Work Schedule

## Purpose

This Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) establishes expectations for the 48/96 work rotation within the fire department. The information outlined in this document is designed to assist shift commanders and captains in guiding their crews through scheduled responsibilities and department-wide projects efficiently and effectively.

## Work Rotation Schedule

### General Guidelines

- **Shift:** The shift consists of a standard workday followed by a discretionary day.
- **Workday Hours:** 07:00- 16:00
- **Discretionary Day Hours:** Will be determined by the needs of the crew.
- **Uniform and Readiness:** On the first day of the shift, all personnel must be in appropriate uniform and ready to respond to incidents by 0700. On the discretionary day, personnel must be in uniform by no later than 0800 unless extenuating circumstances arise. See Flexibility and Completion
- The schedule is designed to be flexible. Crews should strive to achieve all shift goals, ensuring that daily priorities and project work are completed by the end of the 48-hour rotation.
- All tasks scheduled on the daily work schedule and a reasonable portion of current project work must be completed by the end of each rotation.
- The project work assigned will have specific deadlines for completion.
- Captains are responsible for tracking the progress of stations within their hubs.
- Shift commanders have the authority to adjust this schedule when necessary. Adjustments from the discretionary day must be reserved for mission-critical situations or if responsibilities were not met in the first 24 hours.

### Daily Priorities

1. Apparatus and Equipment Checks
  - Conduct thorough truck checks at the beginning of the shift and a secondary inspection 24 hours later, including ensuring all SCBA, PPE, and equipment are clean and in proper working order at the beginning of both days.
2. Training
  - All members must complete and log at least four hours of training per shift, including at least 2 hours of ISO company training.
  - If training is not completed on the first day, it must be completed on the second day.
3. Project Work

- Addressing project work is essential for understanding the layout and hazards of commercial occupancies or the status of hydrants.
  - Companies must complete enough project work per shift to ensure completion within the project's timeline. This may vary by project and company.
4. Station Cleaning and Maintenance
- All stations are expected to be kept clean, orderly, and uncluttered. Basic cleaning and maintenance are expected to be done every shift with special attention given to areas listed below (Designated Maintenance/Cleaning Days). Ensure that dirty items are cleaned and broken items are repaired.
  - Project a positive image of RMF through the condition of the station.
5. Run Reports and Office Work
- All reports and administrative work (payroll, etc.) must be completed by the end of the shift as per NFIRS SOG.

#### Designated Maintenance/Cleaning Days

- **Monday:** Station interior – Deep clean bathrooms, kitchen, sweep/mop floors, etc.
- **Tuesday:** Detailed truck checks
- **Wednesday:** Truck tools and maintenance
- **Thursday:** Stock room and bay floors
- **Friday:** Apparatus deep cleaning – Clean cab, and compartments, lubricate hinges and clean tools
- **Saturday:** General clean up and upkeep.

#### Recommendations

- It is strongly recommended that all assigned daily tasks be completed within 24 hours of beginning the shift. However, all work must be completed by the end of the 48-hour rotation.

By adhering to this SOG, the department aims to maintain high operational readiness and station upkeep standards, ensuring both effective service delivery and a positive public image.