

Heavy vehicle fatigue management - primary producers

Primary producers have an important role to play in managing the fatigue of heavy vehicle drivers, whether you are using your vehicle or someone else's.

There are rules for operating fatigue-related heavy vehicles, however the general principle is that drivers must not drive any heavy vehicle while impaired by fatigue.

This applies to all drivers and operators, including casual and part time drivers like primary producers and farm workers. This is an important principle because **the majority of farming activities aren't counted as fatigue-related activities** when it comes to operating a heavy vehicle but **may still result in heavy vehicle driver fatigue**.



What is a fatigue-related heavy vehicle?

Fatigue-regulated heavy vehicles include those with a Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) of over 12t, a combination when the total of the GVM is over 12t or a truck, or a combination including a truck, with a GVM of over 12t with a machine or implement attached. For more information see [Fatigue-regulated heavy vehicles](#).

Do I have to complete a work diary?

The driver of a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle is not required to complete a National Driver Work Diary if they are working within a 100km radius of their base. This is expanded to a 160km radius of the base if the driver is carrying primary produce.

For more information see the [National Primary Production Work Diary Exemption Notice 2021 \(No. 1\)](#) | [PDF, 660KB](#) and its fact sheet the [Primary production work diary requirements and exemption \(PDF, 897KB\)](#).

If a driver is not using a National Driver Work Diary, the driver and their record keeper must still maintain a driving record, so drivers and operators can track work and rest. Remember, drivers must not drive any heavy vehicle while impaired by fatigue.

When operating a heavy vehicle what does work mean?

Work is driving, instructing or supervising another person driving. It is also sitting in the driver's seat while the engine is running and any task related to the use of a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle. This includes tasks such as loading/unloading the vehicle, inspecting the vehicle, attending to the load, cleaning and refuelling the vehicle and performing marketing tasks for the use of the vehicle.

When operating a heavy vehicle, what types of activities count as rest?

Generally, tasks that don't involve the use or future use of a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle are considered rest. This can include tasks such as paddock work, general administration (other than completing a work diary) or driving a chaser bin.

Operating a header may be defined as work depending on the vehicle the which the header uses to

unload. For example, if a header loads directly into a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle, the time would be counted as work. However, if a header loads into a chaser bin, the time would not be work.

While some of these tasks may not be considered heavy vehicle work, remember they are likely to contribute to fatigue and drivers must not drive any heavy vehicle while impaired by fatigue.

Should I count these other activities when managing my fatigue?

Absolutely. Activities not counted as work will still contribute to a person's level of fatigue impairment. For example, fatigue is a common cause of damage to headers, especially early in the morning and late afternoon. It is also possible for a driver to comply with the work and rest limits and still be impaired by fatigue.

Is waiting in line at the silos considered rest?

If you are in the driver's seat and required to control the vehicle, the queuing time is considered work. Waiting in line at silos is only rest if you do not occupy the driver's seat while the engine is running.

Operating under Standard Hours, what is the rest pattern for a normal day?

In a 24-hour period, you must have at least 12 hours of rest time. These 12 hours of rest must include:

- 15 minutes within the first 5 ½ hours
- 30 minutes within the first 8 hours
- 60 minutes within the first 11 hours
- 7 continuous hours of stationary rest time.

Having a rest every two hours or so is the best way to slow the onset of driver fatigue. This is especially important if you are sick, haven't slept well or are stressed – all things that may happen around harvest time.

What requirements are there to have rest in between working in the paddock and driving the truck?

There is no requirement to rest in between working in a paddock and driving a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle. However, there is still a duty to not drive a heavy vehicle while impaired by fatigue. A driver should rest at any time they feel tired, fatigued or drowsy.

If operating a header from 5am, then driving a truck from 10am, what rest periods am I supposed to have throughout the day?

If the header is used to load a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle, the time counts as work. The driver's 24-hour period and minimum rest requirements would commence from 5am in this example. Operating a header that's loading a chaser bin would not be counted as work, so the driver's 24-hour period and minimum rest requirements would commence from 10am.

In the scenario above what time would I have to finish?

There is no specific finish time, but drivers should limit the amount of work they are allowed to do in a 24 hour period. When operating under Standard Hours, the limit is 12 hours of work. If a driver did the maximum work (12 hours) and complied with the minimum rest requirements (1 hour of short rest breaks), the driver's finish time would be 13 hours after the start of the 24-hour period.

That's 6pm in the case of a 5am start, and 11pm, in the case of a 10 am start. However, the end of the shift would be pushed back if a driver chooses to have more rest than the minimum rest requirements.

Starting work at 6am, when am I due for my rest breaks and how long do they have to be?

Again operating under standard hours, applying the minimum rest requirements to a 24-hour period starting at 6am requires you to take all of the following breaks:

- 15 minutes starting at 11:15 am at the latest
- 15 minutes starting at 1:45 pm at the latest
- 30 minutes starting at 4:30 pm at the latest
- 7 continuous hours of stationary rest time starting no later than 11:00 pm.

In addition to this, the minimum rest requirement is another 4 hours rest at any time before 6am on the following day.



[Daily work and rest hours planner - Standard hours \(solo drivers\)](#)

A handy planner to help you work out when you must take breaks.

If I'm operating the header throughout the night until 2am, at what time can I drive the truck?

While operating the header may not be considered fatigue-related work for the heavy vehicle, it would be unlikely that you would meet your obligation to ensure that you are not driving while impaired by fatigue.

Working at night can lead to insufficient or poor quality sleep, which is a significant cause of fatigue and driver drowsiness. Even though operating a header may not meet the definition of work, a driver should not start work until they've had adequate rest to ensure they are not at risk of driving while impaired by fatigue.

If I am using a contract carrier, do I need to allow them rest?

Yes. You must allow contract carriers time to rest when you engage them to undertake work on your behalf. As part of the heavy vehicle supply chain you should:

- Avoid requests, instructions, requirements or demands (written or verbal) that may influence the driver to speed or drive while fatigued
- Ensuring stock or loads are ready to load on time so that a driver is not unduly delayed and pressured to speed or exceed fatigue hours
- Ensure safe access to the property, for the heavy vehicles and advise drivers of any relevant local knowledge

Who is responsible for monitoring the contract driver's rest?

Contract drivers are responsible for monitoring their own work and rest. However, it's important that you follow the steps in the question above to assist them in doing this.

Do the same fatigue rules apply to me, my employees and to contractors?

Yes. The same rules fatigue rules apply for all drivers of fatigue-regulated heavy vehicles, regardless of your employment status. Primary producers and other parties in the heavy vehicle supply chain must take reasonable steps to ensure drivers are not impaired by fatigue.

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