

As a 17 year veteran pilot for Continental Airlines, I have observed that the intent of the 30 in 7 rule actually works against the best interests of both the airlines and pilots. The real intent should be the per day duty time limits as they relate to a duty period, rather than flight time limits. A so-called "legal" 14 to 16 hour duty day is flat unsafe and not in the best interests of the pilots or the flying public. The 30 in 7 rule merely prevents the pilot from optimizing his schedule and has no impact on safety at all. Whereas the maximum duty period (from report to release) is far more important. Consider an early am show (0600 - which would require at least a wake up of 0430) with one quick leg from Newark to Washington DC. The actual schedule for the day may be something in order of a DC turn then flight to DFW which would end around 10 hours later. The flight becomes delayed owing to weather. It is a creeping delay which means hour by hour the delay unfolds. The pilot could, under these circumstances fly legally until 10 pm (2200 East Coast time). The pilot would have had to have been awake since 0430 to a minimum of 2300, (getting to the layover hotel etc) for a total of 18 hours and 30 minutes awake, of which the previous to last hour of wakefulness would have the pilot landing a potential boat load of people at night perhaps in weather after being awake seventeen and half hours! This is ridiculous, unsafe and not in anyone's best interests. Airlines will flat not address this issue without legal enforcement by the FAA. Traditionally this has been the venue for collective bargaining...a haphazard method at best for addressing a critical safety of flight scheduling item. The 30 in 7 rule needs to be removed from the FAR's and replaced with realistic report to release duty times which are comensurate with safe and realistic commercial operations which now include the inevitable delay as a routine and daily part of the scheduling reality.