

Frozen-Zone Policy

The one-page signed standard that protects the scheduled week from casual disruption. Without this, the weekly scheduling meeting produces a wish list, not a schedule.

Companion to: *Fix the System*, Chapter 7. **Who signs:** maintenance manager AND plant manager. Both signatures required. A policy with only the maintenance manager's signature fails within two months. **Where to post:** in the plant's main maintenance office AND in operations' meeting room. Visible to anyone who might consider requesting a schedule change.

[PLANT NAME] MAINTENANCE SCHEDULING FROZEN-ZONE POLICY

Effective date: _____

1. Purpose

This policy establishes a protected scheduling window for committed maintenance work. Its purpose is to produce a reliable weekly maintenance schedule that operations can plan production around, and to route legitimate urgent work through a defined escalation process rather than through informal disruption.

2. The frozen zone

The **frozen zone** is the **48 hours immediately preceding the scheduled execution** of any maintenance work order.

A maintenance job enters the frozen zone when the clock turns to 48 hours before its scheduled start. At that point, its parts have been kitted (per Chapter 6 kitting protocol), its operator coverage has been arranged, and its crew has been briefed.

3. Changes within the frozen zone

Default rule: No changes to committed maintenance work are permitted within the frozen zone without written Plant Manager approval through the exception process below. A legitimate addition may use available reserve without moving a commitment; log it separately. This scheduling policy does not delay immediate action under the site's safety and emergency-response procedures.

This includes:

- Cancelling a scheduled job.
- Rescheduling a job to a different day within the frozen zone.
- Adding a job that changes committed work, crew availability or an agreed access window.
- Reassigning the crew for a scheduled job.
- Changing the kitted parts list for a scheduled job.

4. Exception: emergencies

Use Chapter 10's three-criterion gate for emergency requests:

- **Safety-critical:** imminent injury, environmental release or regulatory violation if not addressed immediately.
- **Catastrophic equipment failure:** an asset has failed or is actively failing with significant risk to production, capital or downstream systems.
- **Current production loss that cannot wait:** a critical asset or process is down or actively failing, and waiting for the normal planning cycle has a material production consequence.

A non-emergency request may use available reserve without displacing committed work. If it cannot fit, it returns to the planning queue. An urgent label or approaching deadline alone does not authorize displacement.

5. Escalation procedure

When someone wishes to request a change within the frozen zone:

1. The **Maintenance Supervisor** logs and triages the request using the emergency gate. Check whether available named reserve, appropriate craft coverage and access can absorb it without changing committed work.
2. If reserve can absorb the request without displacement: the Maintenance Supervisor may approve the within-week addition. Record reserve use and the addition separately from the original weekly commitment.
3. If reserve cannot absorb it: the **Maintenance Manager** reviews the emergency criteria. Non-emergency work returns to planning; it does not displace a commitment.
4. For a qualifying emergency that requires changing a commitment inside the rolling 48-hour zone, escalate to the **Plant Manager for written approval before the schedule change**. This is the Chapter 7 scheduling exception, not permission to delay an immediate safety response.
5. Record the displaced job, original date, approval, reason and replacement date. Formally reschedule and explain the change to operations. Retain the original weekly baseline for compliance reporting.

6. Request log

Every request to break the frozen zone is logged in the CMMS or a shared tracking sheet, including:

- Date/time requested
- Requestor name and department
- Job in question
- Decision (approved through reserve / approved with displacement / declined)
- If declined, what was the stated reason the requestor believed it was urgent

The log is reviewed monthly by the Maintenance Manager and Plant Manager together. A pattern of declined requests by the same requestor, or frequent false urgency, is a coaching conversation for that person's manager.

7. Weekly compliance reporting

The Maintenance Manager will report to the Plant Manager each week:

- Original jobs committed when the weekly schedule was published: ____

- Those jobs completed on their originally scheduled day: ____
- Schedule compliance: ____%
- Frozen-zone requests: ____ (approved-reserve / approved-displacement / declined)

Schedule compliance = original jobs completed on their scheduled day / original jobs committed x 100. Starts are not completions. Do not remove displaced jobs or add reserve/optional jobs to that denominator. Entering the rolling 48-hour window does not reset the weekly baseline. Report additions and reserve utilization separately, using consistent units.

The book uses 85% as a first working compliance target. Its Chapter 7 break-in work measure includes both reserve-absorbed additions and displacement; agree the work unit locally before comparing it.

8. Review and revision

This policy is reviewed annually by the Maintenance Manager and Plant Manager. Any revision requires both signatures.

Signed:

Maintenance Manager: _____ Date: _____

Plant Manager: _____ Date: _____

Installation notes (not part of the signed policy)

- **Launch date matters.** Announce this policy to all of operations, maintenance, and engineering at a joint meeting. Do not quietly roll it out.
- **Expect pushback in weeks 2-4.** Someone will test the policy with a non-emergency request. The plant manager holding the line on that first test is the single most important moment of the install.
- **If the plant manager won't sign, stop here.** The policy is unenforceable without plant-manager active commitment. Go back to the conversation about why schedule compliance matters before attempting this installation.

From Fix the System by Ivan Getov. Companion to Chapter 7: Schedule. getov.xyz/toolkit/fix-the-system/ch07/frozen-zone-policy. Free. No email required.