

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 scheduled maintenance work are permitted within the frozen zone.

This includes:

- Cancelling a scheduled job.
- Rescheduling a job to a different day within the frozen zone.
- Adding a new job into the frozen zone.
- Reassigning the crew for a scheduled job.
- Changing the kitted parts list for a scheduled job.

4. Exception: emergencies

The only changes permitted within the frozen zone are those that meet the **emergency exception criteria**:

- **Safety-critical.** The change is necessary to prevent imminent injury or environmental release. OR
- **Regulatory compliance deadline.** A regulatory inspection or compliance date within the next 72 hours requires the change. OR

- **Catastrophic equipment failure.** An asset has failed in a way that creates an immediate risk to production, safety, or capital.

Everything else is not an emergency.

5. Escalation procedure

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

1. The request goes first to the **Maintenance Supervisor**, who verifies whether the 15-20% reserved capacity can absorb the change without displacing committed work.
2. If reserved capacity can absorb it: approved, no escalation needed, schedule updated.
3. If reserved capacity cannot absorb it: the request goes to the **Maintenance Manager**, who verifies against the emergency exception criteria in Section 4.
4. If the request meets Section 4 criteria: the Maintenance Manager approves, notifies the **Plant Manager** in writing within 4 hours, and updates the schedule. A committed job is displaced and formally rescheduled with a written explanation to operations.
5. If the request does NOT meet Section 4 criteria: the request is declined and the work is queued for the following week's scheduling meeting. No exceptions.

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:

- Scheduled jobs for the week: ____
- Jobs executed as scheduled: ____
- Schedule compliance: ____%
- Frozen-zone requests: ____ (approved-reserve / approved-displacement / declined)

Target: schedule compliance $\geq 85\%$. Frozen-zone break-in rate $< 15\%$ of scheduled work.

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.