

Pennsylvania

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# TownshipNews

## Digging for Dollars

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## A NEW WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

# Townships Are Jumping on the Bandwagon of Four-Day Workweeks

## Shortened Schedules Expected to Reduce Fuel and Energy Costs

BY BRENDA WILT / ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The eight employees of Cumberland Township in Adams County have been enjoying three-day weekends since the beginning of July. That's when the board of supervisors instituted a four-day workweek to help the staff save on fuel costs.

"The fuel prices are what really prompted it, plus the cost of heating and air conditioning for the building," township manager Flo Ford says.

Cumberland Township is just one of a number of municipalities that have taken their cue from the business world and implemented a workweek of four,

10-hour days. In the case of Cumberland Township, all employees, except the police department, benefit from the new arrangement, which means the municipal office is closed on Fridays.

The transition wasn't huge for many of the workers, Ford explains. "Most were used to working more than eight hours a day anyway," she says. While the public works crew had been working a four-day week for a while, now everyone works from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### Customer service concerns

Sometimes, townships fear that

closing the office one day a week will decrease service to residents. Ford says that hasn't been the case in Cumberland Township.

"There have been no complaints from residents," she says. "They like the office being opened at 7 a.m."

With the office opening an hour earlier, Ford says, residents can drop off permit applications or take care of other business on their way to work. The township also has drop boxes for payments and other paperwork and a Web site that allows residents to conduct municipal business online. Plus, the staff will work longer if necessary to accommodate the public.

"If someone calls and says he can't get to the office until 5:30, someone will stick around," Ford says.

East Penn Township in Carbon County also implemented a four-day workweek in July for its seven full-time employees to help them save on fuel costs. Like Cumberland, the township office is closed Fridays.

"The response has been positive," township secretary and zoning officer Mary Anne Leavitt says. "Residents like that the office is open until 6 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. People have been understanding. There haven't been any real issues."

### Reaping the savings

A four-day workweek may be com-



Fairview Township in York County is hoping to reduce its fuel costs after instituting a four-day workweek for its public works department in July.

ing to College Township in Centre County, too. Although it was originally suggested as a way to reduce commuting costs for employees, manager Adam Brumbaugh says his research has found that there may actually be some cost savings for the township if it closes the office on Fridays.

“As far as fixed infrastructure savings, we could save about \$6,000 a year on lights, heating and air conditioning, and computer costs,” Brumbaugh says. He estimates the township’s public works crew would save up to 20 percent on its fuel costs, depending on where it was working and the type of project.

“One potential for real savings is in the setup and breakdown of jobs,” he says, adding that the longer days could prove to be more efficient. “The crew may be able to complete a job in one day, rather than several.” That, Brumbaugh adds, would eliminate multiple trips to and from the site.

As the *News* went to press, College Township was still hammering out the details of its four-day workweek, such as the hours employees would work, how holidays and vacations would be handled, and other administrative considerations.

“I have been surprised at how many twists and turns there have been in just considering this,” Brumbaugh says. “There are certainly potential pitfalls, but none of those lead me to believe that we would have problems delivering our day-to-day services. If we do go to a four-day workweek, we will expand our online presence to make as many services as possible available over the Internet.”

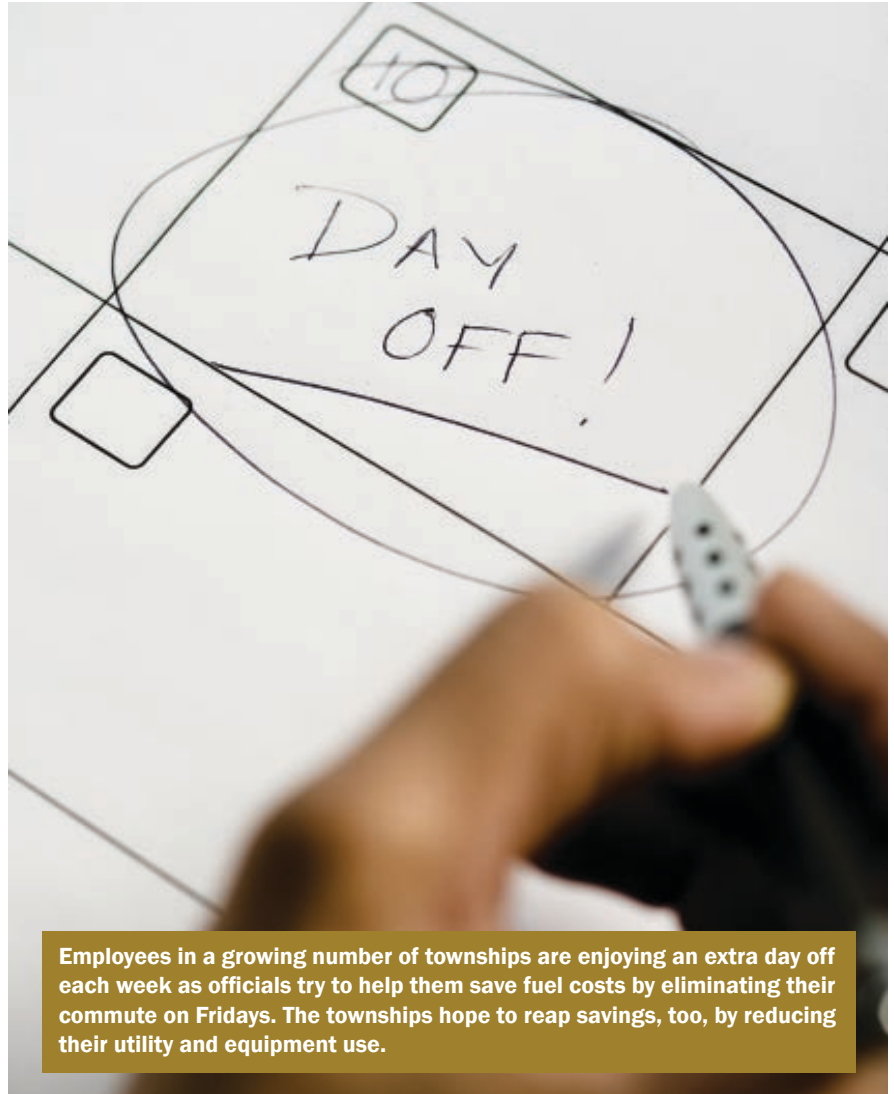
Customer service concerns led Fairview Township in York County to implement a four-day workweek in July

for its 15 public works employees only. The administrative staff works regular hours to keep the office open five days a week.

“I would love to be able to extend it to the office staff, but we don’t have enough people to stagger shifts and keep the office open every day,” manager Steve Smith says. “Part of what we have to look at in government is getting the best value for the taxpayer dollar. At the same time, government has a responsibility to the taxpayer to provide services.”

It’s too soon to tell if the shortened week for the public works employees will result in real savings, Smith says. “We have eliminated one day a week of sending out large equipment and have been able to complete paving projects without paying overtime,” he says. The township will evaluate the program this month and determine if it’s worth continuing.

Several other townships have also gone to four-day workweeks for their public works employees, including Ross and Lake Townships in Luzerne Coun-



Employees in a growing number of townships are enjoying an extra day off each week as officials try to help them save fuel costs by eliminating their commute on Fridays. The townships hope to reap savings, too, by reducing their utility and equipment use.

“There is definitely an **administrative element** that people should **think about** before even **considering it.**”

ty, Genesee Township in Potter County, and Damascus Township in Wayne County, which switched to a four-day week several years ago.

“The roadmaster and the seven-man crew have been very receptive to the policy,” Damascus secretary Karyle Woods says. “The longer workday is a big benefit to us because we have about 100 miles of roads to maintain in the township. With the heat of summer and the amount of roadwork required for maintenance and dust control for our dirt roads, our crew feels the 10-hour, four-day week works well.”

### **Consider carefully**

For townships that may be considering a four-day workweek, College Township manager Adam Brumbaugh suggests working out all of the details in advance and then giving it a trial run.

“My initial recommendation was that if we do this, we have to do it for a long enough period to get a good evaluation,” he says, favoring a six-month to one-year trial period.

Brumbaugh acknowledges that it may not work for every township. “We may be somewhat unique,” he says. “We contract our police services through State College, we have a volunteer fire department, and we have no operations that would require the building to remain open that fifth day.”

The manager adds that he has also considered a nine-day work schedule, in which employees would work four nine-hour days and one eight-hour day the first week, then four nine-hour days the second week, with Friday off. That way the office would be closed only one business day in any two-week period.

“That may be somewhat more palatable to townships and employees,” he says.

Above all, townships should do their homework, Brumbaugh says. “There is definitely an administrative element,” he says, “that people should think about before even considering it.” ♦

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communities across Pennsylvania.

You can learn more by downloading the *Smart Transportation Guidebook* at [www.dot.state.pa.us](http://www.dot.state.pa.us).

Solving the complex transportation challenges we all face will take the active participation of public officials from federal, state, and local governments. Watch for more details and Smart Transportation training opportunities that will be available next spring.

For more information about this and other related issues, call LTAP toll-free at (800) FOR-LTAP (367-5827), e-mail [ltap@state.pa.us](mailto:ltap@state.pa.us), or log onto [www.ltap.state.pa.us](http://www.ltap.state.pa.us). ♦

TO SUBMIT A QUESTION for the LTAP Q&A, contact Tina Highlands at [highlands@psats.org](mailto:highlands@psats.org) or call (717) 763-0930.

## ABOUT THIS COLUMN

THIS COLUMN IS PROVIDED THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP between PSATS and the LTAP Advisory Committee, which is made up of 18 elected and appointed municipal officials and chaired by Doug Roth of Penn Township in Butler County.

PennDOT LTAP helps Pennsylvania municipalities make the best use of their road maintenance dollars by providing technical assistance and training to municipal officials and employees in efficient maintenance procedures, essential safety practices, and infrastructure management processes.

LTAP is funded by the Federal Highway Administration and the state Department of Transportation.

## Upcoming LTAP Workshops

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- November 6 — North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission, Ridgway, Elk County

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### Roadside Vegetation Control

- October 2 — Salem Township Administration Building, Berwick, Luzerne County

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- October 28 — Hatfield Township Administration Building, Montgomery County
- March 3, 2009 — Mahoning Township, Danville, Montour County

### Traffic Signs

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- October 14 — Middleburg Borough Building, Snyder County

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- October 8 — Juniata EMS Building, Mifflintown, Juniata County
- October 14 — Lock Haven City Hall, Clinton County
- October 15 — Point Township Building, Northumberland, Northumberland County
- October 23 — Warwick Township Municipal Building, Jamison, Bucks County
- November 13 — Schuylkill Community Education Council, Mahanoy City, Schuylkill County

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