

Road features can be a large factor in determining the appropriate speed for a stretch of roadway. Lower speed limits can be used as a safety measure on roads with frequent sharp curves, extensive sight obstructions, poor surface conditions, steep downgrades, school and construction zones, and a large number of pedestrian traffic.

WHO CAN ESTABLISH SPEED LIMITS?


State traffic laws regulating vehicle speeds are applicable to all streets within a city unless city ordinances have been passed which set specified speed limits for all or some areas of the city. A speed limit should always be established by conducting a spot speed study and/or be the result of an engineering study. The City periodically evaluates speed limits and traffic conditions to ensure a safe traffic environment.

Other Traffic Informational Brochures Available:

Avoiding Parking Tickets
Children At Play
Left Turn Traffic Signs
Pedestrian Signals
Stop Signs
Traffic Safety Tips
Traffic Signal Systems
Traffic Signals

If you have questions, requests or suggestions concerning traffic, please call the Department of Public Works At (785) 309-5725 TDD: (785) 309-5747 Website: www.salina-ks.gov

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 City of Salina
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SPEED LIMITS

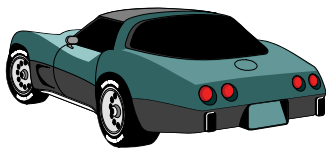
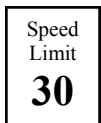
How Are They Set?



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Speed Zones

Speed limits are among the most important tools one can use to create and maintain a safe traffic environment. However, as in all regulatory procedures, the limits imposed must be reasonable and appropriate to the situation. Most drivers tend to regulate their own speed according to traffic, road and weather conditions. Speed limits are often taken for granted and until a problem arises, most people pay little attention to the theory behind them. The following information will help you understand how speed limits are established, and what they can and cannot do.



Speed Limit Misconceptions

When traffic problems occur, concerned citizens frequently ask why we don't lower the speed limit. There are widely held misconceptions that speed limit signs will automatically slow the speed of traffic, reduce accidents, and increase safety. Most drivers drive at a speed that they consider to be comfortable, regardless of the posted speed limit. "Before and after" studies have shown that there are no significant changes in average vehicle speeds following the posting of new or revised speed limits. Furthermore, research has found no direct

relationship between posted speed limits and accident frequency, though accident history is taken into account. Some accidents are speed-related, many are not.

Speed Laws

All fifty states base their speed regulations on the Basic Speed Law:

No person shall drive a vehicle...at a speed greater than is reasonable or prudent...and in no event at a speed which endangers the safety of persons or property.

Under Kansas law, the maximum speed limit in urban areas is 55 MPH. All other speed limits are called prima facie limits, which are considered by law to be safe and prudent under normal conditions. Certain prima facie limits, which are considered by law to be safe and prudent under normal conditions, are established by State law but are subject to home rule modification. These include 30 MPH speed limits in residential districts and 20 MPH speed limits in the downtown business district and school zones when children are present. Park speed limits are 15 MPH, and alley speed limits are 10 MPH.

Speed limits between 30 and 55 MPH are established on the basis of traffic engineering surveys. These surveys include an analysis of roadway conditions, accident records, and a sampling of the prevailing speed of traffic. A safe and reasonable limit is set at or below the speed at which 85 percent of the drivers drive, known as the "85th percentile speed". The experience of traffic engineers has been that posting higher or lower speed limits does not significantly change the 85th percentile speed. Moreover, raising a speed limit to the 85th percentile speed should not result in an increase in the frequency or severity of accidents.

Traffic flowing at a uniform speed results in increased safety and fewer accidents. Drivers are less impatient, pass less often, and tailgate less, which reduces both head-on and rear-end collisions.

The posting of the appropriate speed limit simplifies the job of enforcement officers, since most of the traffic is voluntarily moving at the posted speed. Blatant speeders are easily spotted, safe drivers are not penalized, and patrol officers aren't asked to enforce unrealistic and arbitrary speed limits.

Other Factors to Take Into Consideration

The 85th percentile speed is the first consideration traffic engineers should use in establishing speed zones, but other factors should also be considered.

Accident Experience

Accident experience should always be taken into consideration when establishing speed limits. A high frequency of accidents may indicate the need to re-evaluate the speed limit on a certain road. Knowing the type and frequency of accident occurrence at a given location is useful for determining the adequacy of speed limits and whether other factors may be contributing to a traffic problem.

Traffic Volume

The higher the volume of traffic, the more important it is that most vehicles maintain about the same speed. This will help to minimize the number of passing maneuvers and reduce rear-end type collisions.