



What to know about Speed Limits

How Speed Data is Collected

Radar is the most commonly used method to collect speed data from random vehicles on a roadway. A spot speed study is conducted during slower traffic hours to measure the speed of approximately 100 vehicles in each direction. This data provides the basis for what the drivers perceive as a safe traveling speed.

Types of Speed Limits

Regulatory Speed Limit Sign

This black and white sign shows the maximum speed that a motorist may travel under ideal conditions.

Advisory Speed Sign

This black and yellow speed plaque is used to advise motorists of a comfortable speed to navigate special road conditions. For example, a winding road might have a curve warning sign used with an advisory speed sign.

Special Speed Limits

School Zones

This regulatory speed limit is in effect when school is in session. The “school” and “when flashing” signs are black and yellow and the speed limit sign is black and white.

Work Zones

Speed limits are often reduced in and around work zones to ensure safe travel for motorists and safe working conditions for highway workers. These reductions are sometimes identified with a temporary orange and black work zone plaque that’s attached to the top of the regulatory speed limit sign.

Common Speed Limits

Missouri’s roadways include interstates, freeways, expressways and other lower-volume routes. Interstate highways are part of the national highway system that connects the nation’s major metropolitan areas and industrial centers. The interstate system is divided into urban and rural sections. The distinction between urban and rural areas is based on population density.

A general guide for maximum speed limits on roadways throughout Missouri:

- Rural interstates and freeways: 70 mph
- Urban freeways and expressways: 60 mph
- Rural expressways: 65 mph
- State lettered routes: 55 mph
- All other highways: 60 mph



For more information about speed limits contact:

Missouri Department of Transportation
888-ASK-MODOT (275-6636)
www.modot.org



Missouri has the **seventh-largest highway system** in the country with more than 32,000 miles of state roadways, making speed limits an important issue.

Speed limits are established to protect the public and regulate unreasonable driving behavior. Speed limits keep traffic flowing smoothly and encourage drivers to travel at the speed with the lowest risk of crashes.

Speed Limits

A Case of Majority Rule

The best way to set a speed limit is to find the speed that most drivers consider safe and reasonable. To determine a safe and reasonable speed limit, a speed study is conducted to establish how fast motorists are traveling on a roadway. The speed limit is then set close to the speed that the majority of drivers travel.

The Federal Highway Administration reports that all states and most local agencies use the 85th percentile speed, the speed at which 85 percent of motorists travel, as the basis for establishing speed limits. Studies have shown that traveling much faster or slower than this value can increase your chance of experiencing a crash.

Traffic engineers may adjust the actual speed limit by taking into account:

- Road type and surface (i.e. curve or hill)
- Location and type of access points (i.e. intersections, entrances)
- Roadway length
- Existing traffic-control devices
- Crash history
- Traffic volume
- Sight distances

Does lowering a speed limit always reduce the speed motorists travel and decrease crashes?

No, not always. Studies show that there is little change in the speed pattern after the posting of a new speed limit. The driver is much more influenced by roadway conditions. And crashes are most often the result of driver inattention and driver error. In fact, a posted speed limit that is unrealistically low can actually contribute to crashes.