

Tx DOT Brochure →

3 Warnings to NOT reduce SLs!

2. Numerous studies (ITE, Parker, Mauz, etc.) show that lowered SLs cause more crashes and deaths. Higher limits (85th) reduce fatalities.

The Martin Parker Report (Federal Highway Administration, 1997) studied speed limit changes at 100 sites for five years. He recorded 1.6 million speed measurements. Speed limits set higher resulted in fewer wrecks. Lowered limits consistently caused more crashes.

Variation from mean speed studies consistently show that the slowest drivers cause the most crashes. Faster-than-average drivers are safest. Roughly 5-10 mph above the average reflects the safest travel speeds, hence the 85th percentile speed limit.

Fewer than 5 percent of Americans crash in any given year. More than 90 percent drive in a reasonable manner. A proper, safe speed limit is supposed to reflect the reasonable drivers' speeds, not the other way around. It's called democracy.

3. SLs set 8-12 mph < 85th %ile "minimize safety & are disrespected & disobeyed by 80% of motorists."

Exact opposite of TxDOT's "goal."

1 Safety is the Primary Concern

Most traffic problems are not simple and do not have simple solutions. Requests for lower speed limits are sometimes made with the admirable motive to "quick-fix" a particular problem. However, rarely does a single traffic control tool solve all the traffic problems in a community.

2 Research has shown that speed limits set below the reasonable speed of most drivers do not significantly reduce the number of crashes on a road. In fact, crashes may increase with unreasonably low speed limits.

< 85th %ile >

3 will TxDOT's goal has always been to set speed limits that maximize safety and are respected and obeyed by motorists. By using sound engineering principles, we can provide a balanced transportation system that gets motorists to their destination as safely and as quickly as possible.

only 85th %ile can do this.

Who are We?

TxDOT is responsible for building and maintaining the state transportation system. We have no authority to cite vehicle violations of any kind. That jurisdiction falls under the Texas Department of Public Safety and local authorities.

Other Actions:

In addition to setting reasonable speed limits based on accepted engineering principles, TxDOT uses a variety of traffic control devices to improve safety.

< 85th %ile >

- Not lately.

These include the use of flashing beacons to alert motorists to upcoming intersections; pavement markings and raised pavement markers to guide motorists and signs to advise drivers of reduced speed limits ahead.

Please remember that observing speed limits means more than driving faster or slower than the posted speed. It means driving to conditions. When it's raining or foggy, when ice is on the road, when traffic is heavy, when road construction is ahead, adjust your speed accordingly.

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WHY NOT "LOWER THE SPEED LIMIT" TO REDUCE HAZARDS IN OUR AREA?

An unrealistically low speed limit can actually lead to accidents. Here's why:

- * First, many studies conducted over several decades in all parts of the country have shown that a driver's speed is influenced more by the appearance of the roadway and the prevailing traffic conditions than it is by the posted speed limit.
- * Second, some drivers will obey the lower posted speed while others will feel it's unreasonable and simply ignore it. This disrupts the uniform traffic flow and increases accident potential between the faster and the slower drivers.
- * Third, when traffic is traveling at different speeds, the number of breaks in traffic to permit safe crossing is reduced. Pedestrians also have greater difficulty in judging the speed of approaching vehicles.
- * *Fourth, underposted speed limits dangerously shorten the amount of yellow time at traffic lights needed for safe stopping or clearance.*

Florida Statutes, Chapter 316.189, presents the authority for establishment of municipal and County speed zones maintained by these agencies. For a speed limit to be effective, at least 85 percent of the drivers must (voluntarily) comply with the posted speed limit. It is important to remember that the speed regulation informs the driver of the limits in which one can safely operate a vehicle under normal circumstances and within which the driver can be expected to react safely. Setting speed limits at appropriate levels will create a reasonably uniform flow of traffic, discourage violation of the law and help keep streets and highways safe.

The FDOT criteria for setting speed zones are presented in the publication entitled "Speed Zoning for Highways, Roads and Streets in Florida for Compliance with the Florida Statutes, Chapter 316". This publication indicates "The 85th percentile speed is the speed at or below which 85 percent of the observed free-flow vehicles are traveling". It also states that a speed limit should not be set more than 3 MPH above the 85th percentile speed and it shall not be set more than 8 MPH below the 85th percentile speed.