

Public Works - Traffic Engineering Division

Adopted Speed Limits

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 California law, the maximum speed limit in urban areas is 55 MPH on 2 lane undivided roads and 65 MPH on divided or multilane roads. 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 are established by State law and include the 25 MPH speed limit in business and residential districts, 25 MPH in school zones when children are present, and the 15 MPH speed limit in alleys or; at intersections and railroad crossings, where visibility is very limited. These speed limits do not need to be posted to be enforced.

Speed limits between 25 and 65 MPH, which are adopted by the City Council, 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% of the drivers drive.

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 and defend unrealistic and arbitrary speed limits