

Speed Limits

Speed limits define the legal maximum or minimum speed that drivers may travel on a road and identify a safe and reasonable limit for that roadway. Posted speed limits keep traffic flowing smoothly, provided the majority of drivers find speed limits reasonable. To best do this, speed limits must be consistently set throughout the state.

Nebraska follows statutory speed limits, which provide uniform categories of speeds that can be traveled safely at certain preset maximum speeds under ideal conditions. Speed limits in Nebraska cannot go higher than the statutory speed limits. Speed limits, unless otherwise posted, are:

- 20 mph in business districts
- 25 mph in residential districts
- 50 mph on any roadway that is not dustless (or gravel) and not part of the state highway system
- 55 mph on any dustless (or paved) roadway and not part of the state highway system
- 65 mph on state highway system other than expressway or freeway
- 70 mph on expressways and freeways that are part of the state highway system
- 75 mph on rural interstate highways

SPEED SIGNS

A **regulatory speed limit sign**:

- Has a white background and black letters
- Indicates the speed drivers must not exceed
- Is enforceable as a speed limit



An **advisory speed sign**:

- Has a yellow background and black letters
- Indicates the recommended safe speed
- Is not enforceable as a speed limit, though they can be enforced under the basic speed law that motorists must operate at speeds that are reasonable and prudent for the conditions present



How does NDOT establish regulatory speed limits?

Speed limits sometimes need to be lower than the statutory speed limits based on other conditions. This is called a regulatory speed limit, which the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) sets on state and federal highways based on an engineering and traffic investigation and analysis. A speed limit may be modified based on the following conditions:

- Road type and surface (curve, hill, etc.)
- Location and type of access points (intersections, entrances, etc.)
- Existing traffic control devices (signs, traffic signals, etc.)
- Crash history
- Traffic volumes
- Sight distances
- Pedestrian activity
- Results of a field review and speed study

The most important part of a traffic investigation is the speed study. When choosing a speed, drivers take many factors into consideration. The speed that the majority of people consider reasonable is an important value for NDOT to consider.

Speed limits are subject to revision based on factors such as: crash experience, roadway geometries, parking, pedestrians, curves, adjacent development, and engineering judgment.

Realistic speed limits

- Encourage the majority of drivers to travel at uniform travel speeds.
- Give a clear reminder of reasonable and prudent speeds to nonconforming violators.
- Offer an effective enforcement tool for law enforcement.
- Can minimize public antagonism toward law enforcement from unreasonable speed limits.

Unrealistic speed limits

- Do not invite voluntary compliance, since they do not reflect the behavior of the majority.
- Can lead to unsafe driving behaviors like tailgating, unsafe passing, road rage, and ultimately more crashes.
- Make the behavior of the majority unlawful.
- Increase public antagonism toward law enforcement who may be viewed as enforcing a speed trap.
- May foster a negative image for a community in the eyes of visitors.
- May increase the potential for crashes and incidents along a roadway.



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