

A uniform speed of vehicles helps traffic move more safely and efficiently.

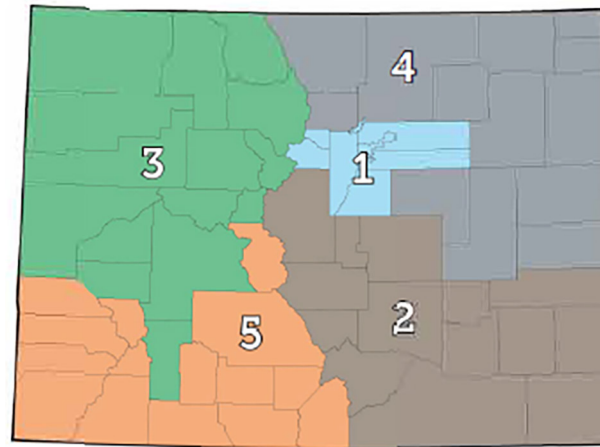
The Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) goal is to establish speed limits that maximize safety and that are respected by motorists. By using sound engineering principles, CDOT can provide a balanced transportation system that gets motorists to their destination as safely and efficiently as possible.

## What You Can do

If you believe that there is a safety or speed limit concern posted on a roadway, (City Street, County Road or Highway), you may report this to an official in charge of that road. If the segment is a portion of the State Highway System, including U.S. and Interstate routes, contact should be made with the corresponding CDOT Region Traffic and Safety Engineer.



**COLORADO**  
Department of Transportation



Setting Realistic  
C o l o r a d o  
S p e e d L i m i t s



## Speed Limit Principals

Setting speed limits to realistic levels helps to protect the public by reducing the potential for vehicle conflicts while moving traffic efficiently. Speed limits also provide a basis for enforcement and sanctions for those who travel at speeds excessive for conditions which could endanger others.



## The Law

Speed limits are posted primarily to regulate motorists to the speed considered reasonable and safe by the majority of drivers on a particular roadway. Prima facie speed limits are those which “at first appearance” are reasonable and prudent under normal conditions.

In Colorado, prima facie speed limits are:

- 20 mph on narrow, winding mountain roads
- 25 mph in any business district

- 30 mph in any residential district
- 40 mph on open mountain highways
- 55 mph on non-interstate open highways
- 65 mph on interstate highways, freeways, or expressways

The absolute speed limits, listed below, are the maximum lawful speed limits and may not be legally exceeded under any circumstances.

- 75 mph
- Posted work and school zones

Colorado traffic laws apply to all state highways, county roads, and city streets and requires that speed limits shall not be higher or lower than the prima facie speed limits unless a thorough traffic investigation or survey, also known as a speed study, has justified the change. For state highways, the speed study is typically conducted and approved by the Safety and Traffic Engineering Branch of CDOT.

Each speed study follows requirements within the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and traffic engineering standards. Factors which may be considered include:

- 85th percentile speed data (speed of 85% of drivers)
- Existing development

- Observed crash history
- Road characteristics
- Environmental factors
- Parking practices and pedestrian /bicycle activity

Some believe that lower speed limits are the solution to all accidents and traffic control problems. Studies have shown that most people will drive as they perceive the conditions of the roadway, ignoring a speed limit that is unrealistically low or high. A speed limit that is “too low” may actually decrease the overall safety of the roadway.

## Safety

CDOT uses a variety of traffic control devices to help reduce crashes on Colorado’s roadways. These devices include signs, traffic signals, flashing beacons, and pavement markings. When it is raining, snowing, foggy or icy, Colorado law requires us to adjust our speed so we are able to travel safely even if the speed we travel is below the posted speed limit. We are also required to drive with tires which meet or exceed Colorado’s Traction Law. We all play a role in keeping our roads safe and should always drive carefully, especially in work and school zones.

## Types of Speed Limit Signs

Once a speed limit is determined, signs are posted along the roadway segment. The following speed limit and speed limit advisory signs reflect a few types you may see along a road when traveling.

### Regulatory Speed Limit and Variable Speed Limit



Black and white sign shows the maximum speed limit under ideal conditions.



Variable speed limits that change based on road, traffic, and weather conditions.

### Advisory Speed



Black and yellow sign to advise motorists of a safe speed. Typically, they are used with a warning sign.

### Regulatory Work Zone Speed Limit



Used to identify maximum speeds within a work zone. These speed limits may not be exceeded under any circumstances.

### Regulatory School Zone Speed Limit



This regulatory speed limit is in effect during a specific time and may not be exceeded under any circumstances.