

## HOW ARE SPEED LIMITS ESTABLISHED?

In Florida, speed limits are set by Florida Statutes Chapter 316, which deals with the “State Uniform Traffic Control”.

Florida Statutes Chapter 316.187 authorizes the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to set maximum and minimum speed limits for travel on the roadways under its authority as it deems safe and advisable, not to exceed 55mph, 65mph on certain designated segments of interstate highways.

Florida Statutes Chapter 316.189 presents the authority for establishment of Municipal and County speed zones maintained by these agencies. This section indicates that the maximum speed on road is 30mph. However, the zones altering such speeds, both as to investigation determines such a conformity with the criteria established



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any Municipality or County may set speed maximum and minimum, after change is reasonable and in by the FDOT.

Traffic engineers throughout the country use the normal driver's speed as a guide in setting speed limits, since most drivers tend to regulate their own speed according to traffic, road and weather conditions.

For a speed limit to be effective, at least 85% of the drivers must voluntarily comply with the law. 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 reasonable 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”. This publication indicates “The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is the speed at or below which 85% of the observed free-flowing vehicles are traveling”. It also states that a speed limit should not differ from the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed by more than 3mph and it shall not be more than 8mph less.

The following excerpts were also taken from the FDOT Speed Zoning publication:

“It is common traffic engineering knowledge that about 85% of drivers travel at reasonably safe speeds for the various roadway conditions encountered, regardless of speed limit signs. It is for those drivers who don't, that the practice of speed zoning does take place, to provide realistic speed restrictions to which meaningful enforcement can be applied.”

“The vehicle speed chosen by a driver may be influenced by the presence of other vehicles, weather, road conditions, road geometrics, adjacent land use, and other factors shown in this manual. A driver's choice of speed is a balance between expedience and safety, and is often a subconscious reaction to the environment.”

“Motorists tend to pay little attention to speed limit signs which they consider unreasonable, unless there is an inordinate degree of enforcement.”

“Unreasonably low speed limits are commonly violated by a majority of motorists, making enforcement difficult, with resultant operating speeds sometimes higher than would exist with proper, realistic speed limits.”