

# SPEED LAWS

Speed limits on most roadways are established through procedures in the California Vehicle Code and federal laws. Speed limit signs, indicating speed limits for which posting is required by law, shall be located at points of change from one speed limit to another.

In California, the maximum speed limit in urban areas is 65 MPH. Certain speed limits are established by State law and include the 25 MPH speed limit in business and residential districts. These speed limits do not need to be posted in order to be enforced. Special speed limits are established within 500 feet of school grounds which are typically 15 MPH to 25 MPH when children are present. School zones can be further reduced to 15 MPH.

Temporary speed limit reductions can be established in construction zones, usually no more than 10 MPH.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT AT:

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### Regular Hours:

Monday: 8:00 am-5:00 pm  
Tuesday: 8:00 am-5:00 pm  
Wednesday: 8:00 am-5:00 pm  
Thursday: 8:00 am-5:00 pm  
Friday: 8:00 am-5:00 pm  
Saturday: Closed



200 Lincoln Ave.  
Salinas, CA 93901

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## ENGINEERING / TRAFFIC SURVEYS

The City of Salinas routinely certifies Engineering and Traffic Surveys which establish speed limits in accordance with state and federal standards. Engineering and Traffic Surveys are generally conducted every 5 years for every non-local roadway to establish speed limits. The survey includes an analysis of roadway conditions, collision records and a sampling of the prevailing speed of traffic. Speed limits are generally set at the 5 mile per hour increment closest to the measure 85th percentile speed. This practice established the maximum speed limit that is safe and reasonable. If an engineering and traffic survey is not performed within the required time frame, posted speed limits are no longer valid and cannot be enforced effectively.

## THE PURPOSE OF SPEED LIMITS

**A speed limit sign is a federal device**, and such as the City of Salinas, and every other posting authority, must comply with the federal requirements set forth in the Uniform Vehicle Code (UVC). The uniform vehicle code establishes that, "No person shall drive a vehicle at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent." In the United States, there are 80,000 posting authorities and about 4 million miles of roads, how would a person know what is expected of them, or the penalties as they go from sign to sign? The UVC establishes the rules for which posting authorities shall conform to when establishing posted speed limits.

Speed limits are established using Engineering and Traffic Surveys which measure the prevailing speeds of roadway users. These studies determine a reasonable and maximum speed limit. The use of Engineering and Traffic Surveys to establish speed limits is not only a federal requirement, it also **lowers the risk of accidents**. Without a uniform process to establish speed limits, how would drivers know what speeds are considered reasonable or police officers be able to enforce drivers traveling at reasonable speeds?

## MISCONCEPTIONS

**"How come the City doesn't install limit signs with lower speed limits to slow down traffic?"**

This is a misconception. Many before and after studies have found that changing the speed limit signs does not change how fast Americans drive. The best known study is Report No. FHWA-RD-92-084: The Effects of Raising and Lowering the Speed Limits. The Federal Department of Transportation conducted a study of speed limits to determine the effects on traffic flow. The study looked at data from 100 sites in 22 states where speed limits were either raised or lowered. Counter to many people's preconception, the study found changes in speed limits had such little effect on driver speeds that is statistically insufficient. Changing speed limit signs does not change driver behavior.

