COUNTY OF Placer®

Department of Public Works

Speed Limits

Speed Limits are determined by either an engineering survey or a statutory speed limit per the California Vehicle Code (CVC).

Speed Limit Based on an Engineering Survey

An engineering survey focuses on a specific road or road segment. The survey records the number of vehicles and the speed at which each vehicle is driving. The speed limit is the result of the 85th percentile speed rounded to the nearest (higher or lower) 5 mile per hour (mph) increment.

The speed limit can be reduced further if it meets certain criteria in the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD). Speed limits for Placer County roads can be found in Placer County Code Article 10.04.010 and at http://qcode.us/codes/placercounty/.

Statutory Speed Limits

Statutory speed limits are set by state law and the California Vehicle Code (CVC) based on the road and the surroundings. These default speed limits are in effect even though a speed limit may not be posted, such as prima facie speed limits and maximum speed limits.

Prima facie speed limits are predetermined speed limits of 15 mph, 25 mph, 55 mph and 65 mph, which are applicable to certain roadways.

Prima Facie Speed Limit of 15 mph applies at:

- Railway crossings
- Alleyways
- Uncontrolled intersections with obstructed sight distance

Prima Facie Speed Limit of 25 mph applies at:

- Business or Residence Districts as defined in the CVC
- Posted school zones while children are present and a physical barrier does not exist between the highway and school grounds
- Roads contiguous to a senior facility with posted senior warning signs

Maximum prima facie applies at all roadways without an engineering survey. The maximum speed limit is 55 mph for two-lane undivided highways and 65 mph for all other highways. However, a roadway may have a higher posted speed limit if that speed is supported by an engineering survey.

Advisory Speed

An advisory speed is displayed on a yellow sign and warns drivers of the recommended speed at a specific location. Most often, advisory speeds warn of curves in the road and are set based on a ball bank analysis. A ball bank analysis consists of driving the curve with a vehicle that has a ball bank indicator. The ball bank analysis translates into a "comfortable" and reasonable speed for roadway configurations.

Design Speed

Sometimes "speed limit" can be confused with the term "design speed". The design speed is the speed determined to be appropriate for roadway design including geometry, sight distance and physical features. Typically, design speed is 10 mph greater than the posted speed.

Radar Enforcement

Radar may be used to enforce speed limits that have been set by prima facie standards or by an engineering survey. Posted speeds which are not supported by engineering traffic studies or prima facie are not enforceable by law enforcement.