

California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

FHWA's MUTCD 2009 Edition, including Revisions 1 & 2 as amended for use in California.

2014 Edition

Revision 2 (April 7, 2017)

State of California
California State Transportation Agency
Department of Transportation



03 Speed Limit (R2-1) signs, indicating speed limits for which posting is required by law, shall be located at the points of change from one speed limit to another.

04 At the downstream end of the section to which a speed limit applies, a Speed Limit sign showing the next speed limit shall be installed. Additional Speed Limit signs shall be installed beyond major intersections and at other locations where it is necessary to remind road users of the speed limit that is applicable.

05 Speed Limit signs indicating the statutory speed limits shall be installed at entrances to the State and, where appropriate, at jurisdictional boundaries in urban areas.

Support:

06 In general, the maximum speed limits applicable to rural and urban roads are established:

A. Statutorily – a maximum speed limit applicable to a particular class of road, such as freeways or city streets, that is established by State law; or

B. As altered speed zones – based on engineering studies.

07 State statutory limits might restrict the maximum speed limit that can be established on a particular road, notwithstanding what an engineering study might indicate.

Option:

~~08 If a jurisdiction has a policy of installing Speed Limit signs in accordance with statutory requirements only on the streets that enter a city, neighborhood, or residential area to indicate the speed limit that is applicable to the entire city, neighborhood, or residential area unless otherwise posted, a CITYWIDE (R2-5aP), NEIGHBORHOOD (R2-5bP), or RESIDENTIAL (R2-5cP) plaque may be mounted above the Speed Limit sign and an UNLESS OTHERWISE POSTED (R2-5P) plaque may be mounted below the Speed Limit sign (see Figure 2B-3).~~

Guidance:

09 *A Reduced Speed Limit Ahead (W3-5 or W3-5a) sign (see Section 2C.38) should be used to inform road users of a reduced speed zone where the speed limit is being reduced by more than 10 mph, or where engineering judgment indicates the need for advance notice to comply with the posted speed limit ahead.*

10 *States and local agencies should conduct engineering studies at least once every 5, 7 or 10 years, in compliance with CVC Section 40802 to reevaluate non-statutory speed limits on segments of their roadways that have undergone significant changes since the last review, such as the addition or elimination of parking or driveways, changes in the number of travel lanes, changes in the configuration of bicycle lanes, changes in traffic control signal coordination, or significant changes in traffic volumes.*

11 *No more than three speed limits should be displayed on any one Speed Limit sign or assembly.*

~~12 *When a speed limit within a speed zone is posted, it should be within 5 mph of the 85th percentile speed of free-flowing traffic.*~~

Standard:

12a **When a speed limit is to be posted, it shall be established at the nearest 5 mph increment of the 85th-percentile speed of free-flowing traffic, except as shown in the two Options below.**

Option:

1. The posted speed may be reduced by 5 mph from the nearest 5 mph increment of the 85th-percentile speed, in compliance with CVC Sections 627 and 22358.5. See Standard below for documentation requirements.
2. For cases in which the nearest 5 mph increment of the 85th-percentile speed would require a rounding up, then the speed limit may be rounded down to the nearest 5 mph increment below the 85th percentile speed, if no further reduction is used. Refer to CVC Section 21400(b).

Standard:

12b **If the speed limit to be posted has had the 5 mph reduction applied, then an E&TS shall document in writing the conditions and justification for the lower speed limit and be approved by a registered Civil or Traffic Engineer. The reasons for the lower speed limit shall be in compliance with CVC Sections 627 and 22358.5.**

Support:

12c The following examples are provided to explain the application of these speed limit criteria:

Example 1. Using Option 1 above and first step is to round down: If the 85th percentile speed in a speed survey for a location was 37 mph, then the speed limit would be established at 35 mph since it is the closest 5 mph increment to the 37 mph speed. As indicated by the option, this 35 mph established speed limit could be reduced by 5 mph to 30 mph if

the conditions and justification for using this lower speed limit are documented in the E&TS and approved by a registered Civil or Traffic Engineer.

Example 2. Using Option 1 above and first step is to round up: If the 85th percentile speed in a speed survey for a location was 33 mph, then the speed limit would be established at 35 mph since it is the closest 5 mph increment to the 33 mph speed. As indicated by the option, this 35 mph speed limit could be reduced by 5 mph to 30 mph if the conditions and justification for using this lower speed limit are documented in the E&TS and approved by a registered Civil or Traffic Engineer.

Example 3. Using Option 2 above and first step is to round up: If the 85th percentile speed in a speed survey for a location was 33 mph, instead of rounding up to 35mph, the speed limit can be established at 30mph, but no further reductions can be applied (which is allowed in the two examples above).

Standard:

^{12d} Examples 1 and 2 for establishing posted speed limits shall apply to engineering and traffic surveys (E&TS) performed on or after July 1, 2009 in accordance with Caltrans' Traffic Operations Policy Directive Number 09-04 dated June 29, 2009.

Option:

^{12e} After January 1, 2012, Example 3 may be used to establish speed limits. Refer to CVC 21400(b).

Support:

^{12f} Any existing E&TS that was performed before July 1, 2009 in accordance with previous traffic control device standards is not required to comply with the new criteria until it is due for reevaluation per the 5, 7 or 10 year criteria.

¹³ *Speed studies for signalized intersection approaches should be taken outside the influence area of the traffic control signal, which is generally considered to be approximately 1/2 mile, to avoid obtaining skewed results for the 85th-percentile speed.*

Support:

¹⁴ Advance warning signs and other traffic control devices to attract the motorist's attention to a signalized intersection are usually more effective than a reduced speed limit zone.

Guidance:

¹⁵ *An advisory speed plaque (see Section 2C.08) mounted below a warning sign should be used to warn road users of an advisory speed for a roadway condition. A Speed Limit sign should not be used for this situation.*

Option:

¹⁶ Other factors that may be considered when establishing or reevaluating speed limits are the following:

- A. Road characteristics, shoulder condition, grade, alignment, and sight distance;
- B. The pace;
- C. Roadside development and environment;
- D. Parking practices and pedestrian activity; and
- E. Reported crash experience for at least a 12-month period.

¹⁷ Two types of Speed Limit signs may be used: one to designate passenger car speeds, including any nighttime information or minimum speed limit that might apply; and the other to show any special speed limits for trucks and other vehicles.

¹⁸ A changeable message sign that changes the speed limit for traffic and ambient conditions may be installed provided that the appropriate speed limit is displayed at the proper times.

¹⁹ A changeable message sign that displays to approaching drivers the speed at which they are traveling may be installed in conjunction with a Speed Limit sign.

Guidance:

²⁰ *If a changeable message sign displaying approach speeds is installed, the legend YOUR SPEED XX MPH or such similar legend should be displayed. The color of the changeable message legend should be a yellow legend on a black background or the reverse of these colors.*

Support:

²¹ Advisory Speed signs and plaques are discussed in Sections 2C.08 and 2C.14. Temporary Traffic Control Zone Speed signs are discussed in Part 6. The WORK ZONE (G20-5aP) plaque intended for installation above a Speed Limit sign is discussed in Section 6F.12. School Speed Limit signs are discussed in Section 7B.15.