

Minnesota Speed Limits

Minnesota's traffic laws include regulation of speeding. State law sets speed limits on state highways and local roads, establishes penalties, and authorizes the Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and in some case local governments, to change the limit. See [Minn. Stat. § 169.14](#).

Basic requirements and speed limits

Speed limits set in statute are default maximums, but under some circumstances MnDOT and local government can modify them. The statutory speed limits are: 30 m.p.h. for city streets and town roads in an “urban district,” which is any segment of a city street or town road that is built up with structures less than 100 feet apart for a minimum distance of a quarter-mile; 65 or 70 m.p.h. for interstates (depending on whether it is, respectively, within or outside an urbanized area of at least 50,000); 65 m.p.h. on divided highways with controlled access; 10 m.p.h. for alleys, mobile home parks, and campgrounds; and a default of 55 m.p.h. on other roads. [Minn. Stat. §§ 169.011](#), subd. 90; [169.14](#), subd. 2; [327.27](#), subd. 2.

Under a 2009 change, the speed limit was increased by 10 m.p.h. when passing on two-lane highways with a posted limit of at least 55 m.p.h. [Minn. Stat. § 169.14](#), subd. 2a. A 40-m.p.h. minimum speed limit applies on interstates.

State law also requires that “no person shall drive a vehicle on a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions.” [Minn. Stat. § 169.14](#), subd. 1. This condition can place an additional obligation on a motorist to lower the speed of travel, particularly if there are dangerous conditions like snow or the presence of a pedestrian.

Adjusted limits in speed zones

MnDOT has the authority to establish speed zones in which the speed limit is higher or lower than the default limits set in law; such limits go into effect once signs are posted. Speed zones are established after MnDOT conducts an engineering and traffic investigation that analyzes factors like roadway design, physical characteristics, traffic volume, crash history, and observed speeds. MnDOT's policy is that the limit should normally be set near the 85th percentile (the speed at or below which 85 percent of vehicles are traveling).

Restricted local authority

Cities, counties, and towns have limited power over setting speed limits, even on their own streets and highways. If requested by a local road authority, MnDOT must perform an engineering and traffic study of the road. However, MnDOT—not the local authority—determines the safe and reasonable speed limit as well as whether to establish a speed zone. This general rule has a few exceptions.

- ▶ If MnDOT has established a speed zone for a city street or town road in an urban district that is at least a quarter-mile long, the city or town can lower the speed limit to 30 m.p.h. [Minn. Stat. § 169.14](#), subd. 5b.
- ▶ In a rural residential district, a local road authority may reduce the speed limit to 35 m.p.h. A “rural residential district” is a segment of a city

street or town road with houses spaced less than 300 feet apart for a minimum distance of a quarter-mile. [Minn. Stat. § 169.011](#), subd. 69a.

- ▶ On a residential roadway, a local road authority may reduce the speed limit to 25 m.p.h. A “residential roadway” is a city street or town road whose total length is up to a half-mile. [Minn. Stat. § 169.011](#), subd. 64.
- ▶ In school zones, a local road authority may prescribe a lower limit that is not less than 15 m.p.h. or more than 30 m.p.h. below the surrounding limit. School zones are defined as a segment of street or highway that abuts school grounds where children have access to the roadway or where a school crossing is established. [Minn. Stat. § 169.14](#), subd. 5a.
- ▶ Subject to certain requirements, lower speed limits can also be set on other roadways, including: (1) park roads (at not less than 15 m.p.h., or more than 20 m.p.h. below the surrounding limit); (2) on streets that have a designated bicycle lane (at not less than 25 m.p.h.); (3) in alleys; and (4) in mobile home parks. [Minn. Stat. §§ 160.263](#), subd. 4; [169.14](#), subds. 5c and 5e; [327.27](#), subd. 2a.

Both MnDOT and local road authorities can set speed limits within highway work zones, which are effective while workers are present, and MnDOT can set temporary construction zone limits along long-term construction projects.

Penalties for speeding violations

Speeding is generally a petty misdemeanor punishable by a base fine normally ranging from \$40 to \$150 and no prison sentence. The amount of the fine is doubled if the violation (1) occurs in a work zone or school zone, (2) involves speeds of 20 m.p.h. or more above the posted limit, or (3) occurs when passing a parked emergency vehicle with flashing lights. In addition, a \$75 court surcharge is imposed for speeding convictions and there can be a law library fee. If a speeding violation is committed in a manner that endangers persons or property, it can be charged as a misdemeanor with maximum penalties of a \$1,000 fine, 90 days’ imprisonment, or both. [Minn. Stat. § 169.89](#), subd. 1.

A driver’s license will be revoked for at least six months for driving over 100 m.p.h. [Minn. Stat. § 169.14](#), subd. 1a. Minnesota does not use a point system, which assigns points to traffic violations and removes driving privileges if too many points accumulate. However, multiple speeding or other traffic violations within a year can lead to loss of a license. [Minn. Stat. §§ 169.89](#); 171.17.

Speeding violations on a driver’s record

A law first enacted in 1986 known as the “Dimler amendment” governs which speeding violations are recorded on a motorist’s driving record maintained by the Department of Public Safety and accessed by insurance companies (but records are still kept by the courts). Speeding violations are not placed on the driving record if the driver traveled:

- ▶ no more than 10 m.p.h. above the speed limit in a 55 m.p.h. zone; or
- ▶ no more than 5 m.p.h. above the speed limit in a 60 m.p.h. zone.

The prohibition on recording violations does not apply when the speed limit is 65 or 70 m.p.h.; if the speeding violation occurred in a commercial motor vehicle; or if the driver holds a commercial driver’s license (class A, B, or C). [Minn. Stat. § 171.12](#), subd. 6.

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