

## Minnesota Speed Limits

### *Basic speed limits and requirements*

Default Minnesota speed limits are set by state statute, and there are various circumstances where they can be modified. The statutory speed limits are: 65 m.p.h. 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; 30 m.p.h. in an “urban district,” which is any segment of a city street or town road with structures spaced less than 100 feet apart for a minimum distance of a quarter-mile; 10 m.p.h. for alleys, mobile home parks, and campgrounds; and a 55 m.p.h. default on other roads. [Minn. Stat. §§ 169.011; 169.14, subd. 2; 327.27, subd. 2.](#)

The limit increases by 10 m.p.h. when passing on two-lane highways posted at 55 m.p.h. or higher. Other limits apply for some specific vehicles. [Minn. Stat. §§ 169.14, subd. 2a; 169.801.](#) A 40-m.p.h. minimum speed applies on interstates.

State law also mandates 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.](#) The provision can obligate a motorist to lower the speed of travel below the limit, particularly if there are dangerous conditions such as snow.

### *Adjusted speed limit zones*

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has authority to establish speed zones in which the speed limit is higher or lower than those set in statute. Zones can be established after MnDOT conducts an engineering and traffic investigation, which analyzes factors like roadway design and characteristics, traffic volume, crash history, and observed speeds. While accounting for other conditions, MnDOT’s policy is that the limit should normally be set near the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of vehicle speeds (that is, the speed at or below which 85 percent of vehicles travel). [Minn. Stat. § 169.14, subd. 5.](#)

### *Restricted local authority*

Cities, counties, and towns have limited power to set speed limits on streets and highways under their own jurisdiction. If requested by a local road authority, MnDOT performs 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.

There are some exceptions that provide for adjusting the statutory speed limits.

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

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

- In school zones a local road authority may, based on an engineering study, prescribe a speed limit that is as low as 15 m.p.h. and no more than 30 m.p.h. below the surrounding limit. [Minn. Stat. § 169.14](#), subd. 5a.
- Subject to various requirements, speed limits can also be adjusted on other roadways, including: (1) park roads (at no less than 15 m.p.h. and no more than 20 m.p.h. below the surrounding limit, and subject to a MnDOT engineering and traffic study); (2) on streets that have a designated bicycle lane (at no less than 25 m.p.h.); (3) in alleys; and (4) in mobile home parks (at over 10 m.p.h. but no more than 30 m.p.h.). [Minn. Stat. §§ 160.263](#), subd. 4; [169.14](#), subds. 5c and 5e; [327.27](#).

### ***Workers present speed limits***

Speed limits are adjusted in work zones. [Minn. Stat. § 169.14](#), subd. 5d.

- An existing speed limit of 50 m.p.h. or higher is adjusted down to 45 m.p.h. when a least one lane of traffic is closed and workers are present, although there are various exceptions to the provision.
- Without an engineering and traffic study, both MnDOT and local road authorities can reduce the limits when workers are present, with restrictions on the extent of a reduction that depend on the existing limit.

### ***Penalties for violations***

Speeding is generally a petty misdemeanor, carrying a base fine that normally ranges from \$40 to \$150, and no prison sentence. The fine is \$300 for a violation in a work zone. The fine is doubled if the violation (1) occurs in a 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. If a speeding violation is committed in a manner that endangers persons or property, it can be charged as a misdemeanor. In addition to the base fine, a \$75 court surcharge is imposed for speeding convictions and there can be a law library fee. [Minn. Stat. §§ 169.14; 169.89](#), subd. 1; [357.021](#), subd. 6.

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

### ***Violations on a driver's record***

A provision (originally known as the "Dimler amendment") governs when speeding violations are recorded on the motorist's driving record maintained by the Department of Public Safety (DPS). [Minn. Stat. § 171.12](#), subd. 6. Records are accessible to insurance companies. The courts keep records separately.

Speeding violations stay off of a DPS driving record if the driver did not exceed:

- 10 m.p.h. over the speed limit in a 55 m.p.h. zone; or
- 5 m.p.h. over the limit in a 60 m.p.h. zone (which had temporarily increased to 10 m.p.h. above the limit during part of 2012 to 2014).

The prohibition on recording violations does not apply if: (1) the speed limit is below 55 m.p.h. or is 65 m.p.h. or higher; (2) the speeding violation occurred in a commercial motor vehicle; or (3) the driver holds a commercial driver's license or learner's permit.

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