

## TRAFFIC AND SAFETY INFORMATIONAL SERIES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION #3

### **Wouldn't the number of accidents go down if we lowered the speed limit?**

People often believe that posting lower speed limits will force drivers to slow down and will result in fewer traffic crashes. Unfortunately, this is not always true. Here's why:

#### **Slow does not mean safe**

Although crashes at high speeds can result in more severe injuries, research has found that higher speed limits do not necessarily result in more crashes. The interstate highway system, for example, has the highest speed limits and yet has a very low crash rate when compared with other types of roadways.

#### **The speed drivers actually travel is often the safest speed**

One principle that helps determine a speed limit is that the safest situation on a roadway is when all the vehicles are traveling about the same speed. When a speed limit is set unreasonably low, some drivers tend to ignore the signs. Other drivers will try to obey the posted speed limit. The result is that the roadway is carrying both fast-moving and slow-moving vehicles, which is the perfect recipe for a crash. Strange as it may seem, it is safer for all drivers to be traveling at the same high or low speed than for some drivers to be driving fast and some driving slowly. Therefore, speeds are usually set based on what most people actually drive.

#### **Other factors**

Other factors are also considered in setting speed limits. These include roadway surface conditions, pedestrian and parking activity, and the record of crashes at the location. These factors, however, must be balanced against the hazard of having vehicles on the same roadway travel at very different speeds.

#### **For more information**

For more information, please contact \_\_\_\_\_.