

Introduction

Speed limit is defined as the maximum allowed speed for a vehicle while it is on the road, a number of factors are considered when coming up with the said limits these are: road features, crash records, administrative and engineering judgment and legal statutes. There are also two common measures used when coming up with the speed limit these are the design speed of the road and the 85 percentile rule. It is believed that vehicles traveling in a similar speed will result in the safest operation thus decreasing the number of accidents.

Will speed limit prevent accidents?

Study shows that there has only a little change in the pattern in which drivers operate his vehicle since the posting of the speed limit, it was observed that drivers are more influenced by the road condition and environmental condition rather than what is posted. It was also believed that imposing the speed limit will be the solution in decreasing the number of road crashes, this was not the case however since crashes and road accident were caused by driver error and driver inattention rather than the drivers “need for speed”. Although it is a fact that there are some highly skilled driver that can in many instances drive at speeds that is way above the allowed speed limit with an acceptable degree of safety, this drivers are only a handful and very few. It should always be remembered that the roads are not a racetrack, and that they were created as a means of transportation. While driving can be a very enjoyable experience, it should not be abused and people should not drive at grossly illegal speeds that would cause harm and danger to others regardless of their reasons

Using that point of argument, it should be practiced that if no danger is caused to others, the police should exercise very considerable discretion before arresting or prosecuting people for speeding on deserted roads when they are all by themselves. Speed limits should also not be set very low since if speed limits are reduced to an extent that most drivers feel to be unreasonable and unrealistic, drivers will tend to break it specially if they believe that they will not be caught and can get away with it. Speed limit will is always going to be an imperfect means of indicating the appropriate speed for a road, however it is always better than not imposing anything at all, therefore speed limits do have an important role to play in road safety.

The purposes of speed limits are twofold:

1. They provide needed information to drivers about the type of road environment, the appropriate maximum speed in clear conditions as well as the hazard frequency, it is a fact that a good driver does not have to rely on this for he can work much of this out for himself, however a properly set speed limit gives it to you in a convenient shorthand. By the same token, an inappropriate.
2. It is also used as a tool to persecute drivers who has a propensity in driving at a very high speed with out considering that fact that they can cause danger to other road users.

However, speed limits should be:

- Appropriate and based on the characteristics and conditions of the road
- it should be consistent with various authorities so as not to create confusion amongst the motorists

- when imposing such it should be enforced with an element of discretion, considering the fact that exceeding the speed limit by a small margin is not inherently dangerous, but may be in some circumstances

Setting speed limits should be reasonable since it can lead to two adverse effects.

- If set too low they make violators out of reasonable and otherwise law-abiding citizens.
- It will diminish police enforcement, which plays a vital role in controlling the speed limit. Unrealistic speed limits create a difficult situation for the police and the community and citations are not upheld in court.

Conclusion

In conclusion, speed limits should in effect be enforced on the basis that they are "strongly advisory" rather than mandatory, although it is a difficult concept to express in law. However, any kind of law that draws a "line in the sand" between what is legal and illegal needs to be enforced with considerable discretion, it should be recognized that straying a little way beyond the line is not necessarily all that reprehensible, and that the strict that enforcement of the speed limits to the letter is highly dangerous and which is very likely to result in drivers paying too much attention to the speedometer and not enough to the road.

References:

Association of British Drivers views on speed limit setting an enforcement

The Speeding Driver: Who, How and Why? A major research report into the psychology of the speeding driver.