PART 6. TEMPORARY TRAFFIC CONTROL
Chapter 6H. Speed Limits in Temporary Traffic Control Zones

6H-1 General

There are three different methods of speed limit signing available for speed control in temporary traffic control zones, advisory speeds, temporary speed limits in construction zones, and work zone speed limits. It must be noted that signing alone will not reduce the speed through a temporary traffic control zone. The driver must clearly perceive the need to reduce speed before a reduction in speed can be achieved. The worker should not feel a false sense of security with temporary traffic control zone speed limits in place. The speed limit in temporary traffic control zones must be used correctly and judiciously to obtain the maximum effectiveness, to earn drivers respect and to gain compliance.

6H-2 Advisory Speeds

The purpose of advisory speeds is to identify safe speeds for specific hazards. Warning signs with advisory speed plaques warn drivers of a particular hazard or a potentially hazardous condition and indicate the safe speed at which to take the hazard. Examples of situations where an advisory speed plaque may be used are bypasses to indicate the curve, low and no shoulder situations, and where there is reduced visibility due to work activities, environmental factors or geometrics.

Advisory speed plaques may be posted any time a hazard is present; an authorization from the Commissioner of Transportation is not necessary.

Traffic engineering personnel should be consulted as to the reasonable speed to be posted.

In some situations such as sharp curves, there are recommended maximum speeds established for a certain degree of curve. In situations other than horizontal curves, the proper advisory speed is determined by experience and good engineering judgement.

When used, the Advisory Speed Plaque (W13-1) shall be installed below the appropriate advance warning sign(s) or below the Worker Ahead sign (W21-1a).

The advisory speed plaque shall be the same color as the warning sign it is installed with and be at least 24 x 24 inches.

Advisory speed plaques shall not be posted alone.

In-place speed limits shall be reviewed to ensure that the advisory speed is not greater than the regulatory speed.

Once installed, the advisory speed should be tested by driving through the hazard at the posted advisory speed.

Care should be taken when posting an advisory speed plaque that it is not placed near a regulatory speed sign so that the motorist may confuse the two speeds.

6H-3 Temporary Speed Limits in a Construction Zone

Temporary speed limits in a construction zone are regulatory speed limits that indicate a full-time regulatory speed through a temporary traffic control zone or a detour. They are established for long term stationary temporary traffic control zones and remain in place on a twenty four hour basis. These speed limits are used where the physical features of the roadway require lower vehicle speeds. Examples include a detour with poor geometrics or a two-lane, two-way operation on what is normally a four-lane
divided highway. Temporary speed limits are primarily used to provide safety for the motorist. They are not used if the workers are directly adjacent to the traveled thru lane with no protection.

**STANDARD:**

An order from the Commissioner of Transportation shall be obtained to establish a temporary speed limit on all roads. A traffic engineering investigation shall be performed in order to establish a safe and reasonable speed limit.

**GUIDANCE:**

The traffic control zone should also be monitored throughout the duration of the project to ensure that the appropriate speed limit is in place. The date of installation and removal of the signs should be documented on the speed limit authorization form for enforcement purposes.

**STANDARD:**

The SPEED LIMIT signs (R2-1) used for the temporary speed zone shall have a black legend and border on a white background. They shall be installed at the beginning of the temporary traffic control zone and a second sign installed 750 feet into the zone as a confirmation sign. At the end of the temporary traffic control zone, a SPEED LIMIT sign with the original speed limit for the roadway shall be installed to indicate the end of the zone and the return to normal driving conditions (see Layout 6J-22).

When the temporary speed limit results in a reduction of 15 mph or greater from the previous zone, a Speed Reduction sign (W3-5) shall be installed in advance of the temporary traffic control zone.

6H-4 Work Zone Speed Limits

**SUPPORT:**

A work zone speed limit is a regulatory speed limit in a temporary traffic control zone to improve worker safety.

**STANDARD:**

A work zone speed limit shall not be used on a two-lane, two-way roadway or wherever a closed lane separates the traffic from the work space.

These speed limits shall only be used when workers are present and working directly adjacent to the traveled lanes. Work zone speed limits shall be removed or covered during non-working hours.

**GUIDANCE:**

Typical applications where work zone speed limits should be used include a concrete joint repair project, or a bituminous paving project where workers are adjacent to traffic.

**OPTION:**

The local road authority may authorize a work zone speed limit within the limitations established in Minnesota Statutes 169.14, subdivision 5d.

**SUPPORT:**

Statutes provide for a maximum work zone speed limit of 55 mph on divided, four-lane highways and a maximum of 40 mph on other roads. The statute allows for reducing the existing speed limit by as much as 15 mph. However, the work zone speed limit must be always be 20 mph or greater and not exceed the maximum permitted work zone speed limits. As a rule, a 10 mph speed limit reduction will gain the best compliance.

**STANDARD:**

A work zone speed limit assembly shall consist of a black and white SPEED LIMIT sign (R2-1) with a black and orange FINES DOUBLE sign (R2-6aP) installed above it.

**GUIDANCE:**

A work zone speed limit assembly should be placed near that portion of the work zone where the workers are actually working. An advance speed limit sign should be placed at least 300 feet in advance of the work area to notify drivers of the reduction in speed.

**STANDARD:**

As the work activity proceeds downstream thru the work area, the advance speed sign shall be no greater than 2500 feet from the active work area where workers are present. When the workers reach this distance, the sign shall be relocated closer to the active work area.
If the work activity is rather stationary, studies have shown that the optimum speed reduction and compliance occurs when the advance speed sign is located approximately 1200 feet in advance of the active work crew.

**STANDARD:**

All work zone speed limit sign assemblies shall be installed on the edge of the shoulder of the thru lane at a least one foot above the pavement.

All inplace speed limit signing shall be removed, folded or covered while the work zone speed limit is inplace.

**OPTION:**

Where the work zone speed limit signs are installed and removed each day, the inplace speed limit signs may be covered for the duration of the project if the inplace speed limit is determined by state statute or matches a statutory value. For other speeds limits, the first sign of the inplace speed zone and the inplace speed limit signs at major intersections shall be covered and uncovered daily.

**STANDARD:**

All work zone speed limit signs shall be covered, folded, or removed when the workers are not present or are not working directly adjacent to traffic.