

# Driver Safety Letter

presented by



## Speeding

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As a professional driver, you know first-hand the dangers of driving too fast for conditions. Earlier this month, the Governors Highway Safety Association issued a report that shows what we all know – that speeding-related fatalities account for about one-third of total highway fatalities. Nationally, there were 9,717 speeding-related fatalities in 2017 – about 26% of the total, though the proportion of speeding crashes differs dramatically across the states.

Speeding-related fatalities, according to the Governors Highway Safety Association are associated with a number of factors, including driver characteristics, risky behaviors such as alcohol-impaired driving, marijuana-impaired driving or failure to buckle up, and environmental factors such as the built environment and driving conditions. Speeding-related crashes also have unique impacts for vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists and roadside workers.

Several years ago, the National Highway Traffic Administration reported that speeding—increases crash risk in two ways: (1) it increases the likelihood of being involved in a crash, and (2) it increases the severity of injuries sustained by all road users in a crash.

The relationship between speed and crash involvement is complex, and it is affected by factors such as road type, driver age, alcohol impairment, and roadway characteristics like curvature, grade, width, and adjacent land use. In contrast, the relationship between speed and injury severity is consistent and direct. Higher vehicle speeds lead to larger changes in velocity in a crash, and these velocity changes are closely linked to injury severity. This relationship is especially critical for pedestrians involved in a motor vehicle crash, due to their lack of protection.

Sadly, we have made limited progress on the issue of speeding. Speeding remains a publicly-accepted driving behavior that is reinforced among motorists, policymakers and transportation stakeholders. National surveys of U.S. drivers have found that although drivers identify speeding as risky, drivers nonetheless continue to speed. Too many drivers have a minimal perception of risk of either getting a ticket, causing a crash, or violating social norms.

Aside from federal, state and local policy, enforcement and technology, as professionals, we have the responsibility to take a number of key action steps to better address speeding. Below are some tips that will help you maintain a safe speed for various driving conditions.

- **Know before you go.** Arrive for your shift early. Know road and traffic conditions and don't be in a hurry.
- **Reduce your driving speed in adverse road and/or weather conditions.** Adjust your speed to safely match weather conditions, road conditions, visibility, and traffic.
- **Enter curves slowly.** Speed limits posted on curve warning signs are intended for passenger vehicles, not large trucks. Large trucks should reduce their speed even further. Studies have shown that large trucks entering a curve, even at the posted speed limit, have lost control and rolled over due to their high center of gravity. Some 40% of speeding-related fatalities occur on curves.
- **Reduce speed before entering an exit/entrance ramp.** In a similar vein, approach an exit/entrance ramp at a safe speed.
- **Drive slowly with a loaded trailer.** Loaded trailers have a higher center of gravity and sudden speed adjustment may cause the load to shift, leading to skidding or a rollover.
- **Slow down in work zones.** Before entering a work zone, decrease your speed, merge into the correct lane well ahead of any lane closures, and be prepared to slow down or stop suddenly.