

DID YOU KNOW???

SPEED LIMITS ARE EITHER STATUTORY, LINEAR OR AREA

In New York State, there are three types of speed zones. The State statutory speed limit, established by state law rather than by the characteristics of a particular road, is 55 mph and is the speed limit that must be obeyed unless a different speed limit is posted. The two other speed limits are linear and area speed limits. The placement and required number of signs for linear and area limits is dictated by the national Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and the NYS Supplement.

Linear speed limits are just what it implies – a speed limit along a street, road, or highway. In upstate New York, linear limits are frequently found along state or county roads in hamlets or small villages, or along populated areas where there is an abundance of houses, businesses, or general built-up areas. Good examples in Franklin County would be Route 11B through West Bangor or Bangor, Route 11 through N. Bangor (all 40 mph), Route 3 through Bloomingdale (35 mph), Route 86 through Ray Brook (45 mph), and Route 86 north of Saranac Lake, where a 40 mph zone begins just north of the Adirondack Medical Center to the village line. Obviously there are many others.

The MUTCD and State Supplement require signing linear speed zones every so many feet depending on the speed limit. For any given speed limit, a second speed limit sign is required within 1100 feet from the start of the limit and subsequent speed limit signs every multiple of the speed limit times 100. For example, as a driver approaches Saranac Lake from Gabriels, the first 40 mph sign is located at the start of this speed limit. The second 40 mph sign must be within 1100 feet from the first sign. Subsequent 40 mph signs are required every 4000 feet (40 mph times 100), no matter how long the zone is. Furthermore, if there is sufficient traffic coming off an intersecting road, it should trigger additional speed limit signs on the main road if deemed necessary.

By state law, no linear speed zone shall be less than 25 mph with the exception of a school speed zone, which is normally 10 mph less than the posted speed limit but not less than 15 mph.

Area speed limits include an entire area of streets or roads and thus eliminate the need to sign each street or road separately, unless a different speed limit is posted for a street or road within the area. The most common example of an area speed limit would be a village. In Franklin County, our larger villages of Malone, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake are posted as area (village) speed limits of 30 mph at the village line on all roads leading into the villages. Within an area speed zone it's possible to post a street or road at a speed limit other than the area limit. An example would be Finney Blvd. in Malone between Woodard St. and the village line, which is posted at 40 mph. By state law, area limits cannot be less than 30 mph, with the exception of New York City, which now has a speed limit of 25 mph.

Although there are school speed zones and reduced speeds in work zones, they are really just linear speed limits. In work zones, signs dictate the work-zone speed limit. In school speed zones, unless signs state otherwise, by state law, the school speed zone is in effect from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on school days. Although not all school speed zones have the hours stated, there should be a plaque defining the effective times.

Hopefully this enhances your understanding of how speed limits work in NYS.