

DID YOU KNOW???

SPEEDING PASSENGER VEHICLES SERIOUS PROBLEM - NTSB

Over the past decade I have written numerous “Did You Know” articles about the problem of speeding. Now, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) labels speeding as a persistent problem on US roads, contributing to the loss of more than 112,500 lives in crashes from 2005 to 2014, according to the October 19, 2017, issue of “Status Report” from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS).

Even though most drivers agree that speeding is a safety risk, they don't feel the same stigma about driving faster than the speed limit as they do about driving while impaired by alcohol, the NTSB noted. Unlike alcohol, there are no nationwide public education programs addressing the dangers of speeding. The NTSB urged the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to partner with traffic safety advocates to develop and launch a campaign to raise awareness about the risks of speeding.

States routinely establish speed limits based on the observed operating speeds on road segments, specifically the 85th percentile speed of free-flowing traffic as outlined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The NTSB notes that there are other ways to set speed limits which take into account crash statistics, and in urban areas, road use by pedestrians and bicyclists. The board called on the FHWA to remove from the traffic manual the guidance that speed limits in speed zones be set within 5 mph of the 85th percentile speed and revise the manual to strengthen protection for vulnerable road users.

The reality is that EVERY driver speeds – some just sometimes and others almost all the time. As drivers, we have come to realize that enforcement agencies allow some leeway, only ticketing drivers at X mph above the posted speed limit. Thus, most drivers that I know, including me, routinely drive at the speed limit plus anywhere from 5-10 mph over the limit, assuming that they are safe at this speed.

To deter speeding and raise public awareness of speeding as a traffic safety issue, high-visibility enforcement is needed, the NTSB says. IIHS research has shown that *speed cameras* work to get drivers to slow down, and their use leads to long-term changes in driver behavior and substantial reductions in deaths and injuries.

The NTSB urged states to remove barriers to the use of speed cameras. Only 14 states and the District of Columbia use them, typically with restrictions on the types of roads and locations where they can be deployed. D.C. is the only U.S. jurisdiction that doesn't limit when and where speed cameras are used. As of October, 142 communities had speed camera programs. In NYS, speed cameras are only allowed in New York City.

Vehicle-based approaches also can help to reduce speeding. Intelligent speed adaptation systems use GPS or cameras that “read” signs to determine the speed limit and warn drivers when they exceed it or in some cases, intervene to limit vehicle speed. Drivers can set adaptive cruise control systems, for example, to stay below a set speed. Technology will play a big part in controlling the speeding problem in the US.

For more articles on traffic law and safety, go to the traffic safety board's web site at: www.franklincony.org and click on “Traffic Safety Board” under departments then look for Did You Know articles. You may also email me at: dwerner151@verizon.net