

High Speed Means High Risk

Time is definitely at a premium in today's world. We are always in a hurry—to get to work, to get home, to get to our vacation spot—so it's easy to think of the open road as something of a racetrack. But when such thinking can cost your life or someone else's, it's a good idea to be fully aware of the risks of driving too fast.

A Clear Relationship

There's no doubt that high speed leads to more highway death—thanks to the energy crisis, there are statistics to prove it. In 1974, when the speed limit in the U. S. was reduced from 65 m.p.h. to 55 m.p.h., the death toll on rural interstate highways dropped by 16 percent; and when the speed limit went back to 65 m.p.h. recently the death rate shot right back up to pre-1974 levels. In fact, you are twice as likely to be killed in a highway crash going 65 m.p.h. as you are going 55 m.p.h.

If you're one of those drivers who believe that the faster you drive the faster you'll get to your destination, consider this: If you drive 100 miles at 65 m.p.h., you will arrive only 17 minutes sooner than if you drive 55!

The Posted Limits

Of course, freeways are not the only roads with posted limits. Any

time you exceed the speed limit, you increase the risk of an accident. Also remember that those limits were designed for most cars traveling under normal road and weather conditions. For example, if you drive a van or other vehicle with a high center of gravity, you can't take a curve as quickly.

Unsafe Conditions

Weather conditions also help determine the safe speed limit. Fog or glare from the setting sun limit your visibility and hence your reaction time to a hazard; sleet, ice, snow and even light rain make roads slippery and traction poor, especially if you do not have winter

tires. And heavy rain can pool on the road, causing "hydroplaning"—at high speeds, your tires ride on a film of water instead of the road. You are literally skimming over the surface. Posted speed limits may be dangerously high in such weather conditions.

High Speed Is Expensive

Driving at a safe speed saves more than lives; the greater fuel efficiency of 55 over 65 means that you save 38 percent in fuel costs. And because stress and vibration increase at high speeds, obeying the 55 mile limit saves 40 percent on overall maintenance. But driving at unsafe speeds can cost far more

than just fuel and maintenance. An accident raises your insurance rates and costs you out-of-pocket medical expenses and lost work time. We rarely consider these "hidden costs" when we focus only on saving time.

What If Everyone Does It?

It's human nature to feel that speeding is justified if everyone else on the road is doing it. But you know speeding is dangerous—why not be the one who sets the example rather than the one who follows it? Your safe driving is guaranteed to influence others to slow down. 🚗

