



SIGN INSTALLATION POLICY

Speed Limits



The Municipality of Anchorage has adopted speed limits that are located at Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) 9.26.

An introductory point needs to be made: Posted Speed Limits represent the MAXIMUM legal travel speed on a roadway under ideal roadway conditions. Road users are obliged to use reasonable judgment when operating their vehicles, and consider the conditions: icing/snow, fog, rain, traffic congestion, lighting, pedestrian activity, that exist at the time that they are operating a vehicle.

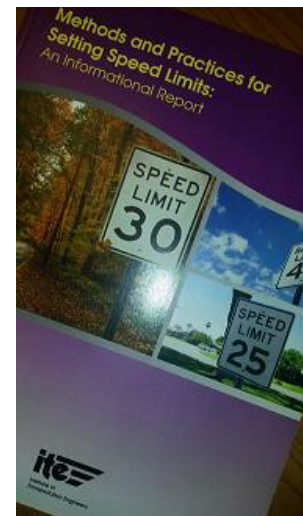
Anchorage Municipal Code 9.26.010 states

“No person may drive a vehicle at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions and having regard to the actual and potential hazard then existing.”

From the Institute of Transportation Engineers

“Selecting an appropriate speed limit for a facility can be a polarizing issue for a community. Residents and vulnerable road users generally seek lower speeds to promote quality of life for the community and increased security for pedestrians and cyclists; motorists seek higher speeds that minimize travel time. Despite the controversy surrounding maximum speed limits, it is clear that the overall goal of setting a speed limit almost always to increase safety within the context of retaining reasonable mobility.”

Methods and practices for Setting Speed Limits: An Informational Report, Institute of Transportation Engineers, 2012



Several basic principals are used by the Traffic Engineer with respect to the installation of these – and other types – of regulatory signs.

First, traffic control devices – particularly in residential areas – should be used to the least extent possible. Over-signage – particularly along residential streets where there is already considerable demand for driver attention – results in an additional distraction to motorists. That incremental distraction can be a problem for the safety of pedestrians in, near, or crossing the roadway and the safe movement of cars into and out of driveways.

Second, any over-signage will result in a reduction in the effectiveness of the messages being communicated to road users. This can and will affect the effectiveness of the information being communicated by those signs that are critically-needed to warn motorists of conditions that they might not be aware of – and which are potential hazards to pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists.

Third, as suggested above, signs should be used to advise road users of conditions that they might not reasonably expect.

Municipal Policy on Posted Speed Limits:

For these – and other reasons – the Municipality of Anchorage establishes as a policy that, particularly in residential areas, speed limit signs will be installed only at the entrance(s) to residential neighborhoods – where a motorist is exiting a higher speed limit roadway and must reduce their speed to that which is appropriate for a residential neighborhood. Speed limit signs may be added in rural residential neighborhoods where a residential street might be ½ mile, ¾ mile, or longer, and supplemental speed limit signs may be appropriate to remind road users of the appropriate speed limit.

In addition, the Municipality of Anchorage establishes as a policy that, consistent with Alaska State law, residential streets will typically be posted for a 25 MPH speed limit. Variations, as permitted by either good professional judgment by the Traffic Engineer of the existence of a special hazard¹, or, the limited conditions outright permitted under Municipal Code.

The presence of children in a residential neighborhood will not necessarily be considered a ‘special hazard’ (as codified at A.M.C. 9.30.030) for establishing a speed limit below that otherwise appropriate for a residential roadway. The extent of overall pedestrian activity, at a particular time of day or street, is a factor that a motorist must use in selecting an appropriate speed below the posted maximum *at that moment*.

Produced by the Traffic Safety Section
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¹ This will typically include schools with high numbers of school-age pedestrians abutting the road in question, roads with an above-average crash history, or unique roadway and roadside conditions: narrow pavement, unpaved roads, steep drop-offs adjacent to the road, etc.