

Cities and counties in California are required to follow the California Vehicle Code (CVC), primarily Sections 22357 and 22358, to establish speed limits within their jurisdictions. The law requires speed limits to be set by ordinance on the basis of an engineering and traffic survey.

Speed zoning is the practice of establishing speed limits that are reasonable and safe for specific sections of roadway. When used properly, speed zoning is an effective traffic engineering tool that can enhance traffic safety.

The Public Works and Police Departments work cooperatively to manage and enforce traffic safety within the City of Elk Grove. This brochure explains the rationale for speed limits and the process behind setting, adjusting and enforcing speed limits within the City.

**Elk Grove Police Department**  
8400 Laguna Palms Way  
Elk Grove, CA 95758



916-627-7111

DIAL 9-1-1 for Emergencies  
[elkgrovepd.org/traffic](http://elkgrovepd.org/traffic)



# ABOUT SPEED LIMITS



## WHY DO WE NEED SPEED LIMITS?

The majority of motorists drive safely and sensibly. Speed laws are in place to assist law enforcement to control the unreasonable violator whose driving behavior is unsafe for other motorists sharing the roadway.

The basic purpose of speed zoning is to influence motorists to drive at about the same speed as other cars on the road. This helps keep traffic flowing smoothly and reduces conflicts caused when people drive at widely varying speeds which can result in traffic crashes caused by unsafe lane changes, tailgating, and other hazardous driving maneuvers.

## ASSESSING SPEED LIMITS

Engineering and traffic surveys are typically conducted by 1-2 Public Works staff using speed survey sheets and speed measuring devices, usually radar, to observe and record the prevailing speeds of 50-100 randomly selected vehicles during off-peak hours, when traffic is most likely to be free-flowing. Locations are selected to be far enough away from stop signs, traffic signals, or anything that would interrupt the flow of traffic – mid-block in a residential area or midway between intersections on a roadway. On multi-lane streets, separate samples are taken for each direction of travel.

Engineering and traffic surveys also incorporate reviews of the physical characteristics of the roadway, adjacent development and collision history. A concentration in reported crashes that's significantly higher than normal for the type of roadway being studied may prompt

consideration of other corrective measures including a greater emphasis on enforcement or adjustments to the speed zone.

Elk Grove city staff analyzes the data collected from engineering and traffic surveys to calculate the “critical speed” at or below which 85 percent of traffic is moving along a given segment of roadway. The 85th percentile speed is rounded to the nearest 5 mph increment and used to provide a safe, reasonable and recommended speed limit.

## PRIMA FACIE

Prima facie speed limits are established by California Vehicle Code statutes that indicate that the speed limit is in effect if certain criteria are met such as proximity to a school, business or residential district. A prima facie speed limit does not need to be posted to be in effect. The following are the most typical locations for prima facie speed limits in the City of Elk Grove.

- Residential District – 25 mph
- Business District – 25 mph
- School Zone – 25 mph when children are present
- Alleyway – 15 mph
- Uncontrolled Railroad Crossing – 15 mph

## ADJUSTING SPEED LIMITS

Adjustments to speed limits within the City require presentation of the process, survey results and other relevant information to the City Council for review and approval during a public meeting. Approved changes are adopted by ordinance and incorporated into the Elk Grove Municipal Code (EGMC) Chapter 10.48 Speed Zones. Changes in the

EGMC require a second reading and 60 day adoption period before they take effect.

## ENFORCING SPEED LIMITS

For law enforcement officers to enforce speed limits using a device that measures and registers the speed of vehicles, such as a radar speed-measuring unit, the posted speed limit must be established in full compliance with state laws as defined in the CVC and the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD).

## SPEED CONTROL PROGRAM

In 2008, the City adopted a Speed Control Program that empowers residents to work with city staff to identify tools to address speeding in their neighborhood. Residents may submit a petition form to initiate a review by city staff to determine if traffic calming tools like speed humps, lumps or tables are appropriate to address their speed concerns. Streets are ranked and qualified based on traffic count, speed surveys, adjacent land uses and other criteria for possible funding in each fiscal year.

To review the full program guidelines and/or submit a request for a speed control evaluation, visit the City's web site at [elkgrovecity.org/traffic](http://elkgrovecity.org/traffic) or contact the City's Traffic Engineer at **(916) 478-2255**.