Speed Limits in the ACT

The ACT road hierarchy defines road types and is used for determining appropriate speed limits on these roads. The limits depend on the type and condition of the road, the mix of traffic using it and the features of the roadside.

In the ACT, the default speed limits are as follows:

› In a built-up area – 50km/h
› In a rural area – 100km/h

When other speed limits apply, signs indicate the start and finish of the special section.

School zones operate on a part-time basis, and vehicles travelling in a school zone must not exceed 40 km/h when the school zone is operating.

What You Can Do

› Speed limits are the maximum travel speed for any road. Drive within the speed limits.
› If you don’t see a speed limit sign, remember that the default speed limit is 50km/h in a built-up area and 100km/h in a rural area.
› Remember that speed limits are there to protect all road users.
› Drive according to the prevailing road conditions.
› Slow down to give yourself time to see hazards, time to assess them and time to avoid them.

To obtain more information on this or other road safety topics visit: www.justice.act.gov.au

What the ACT Government is doing

› Setting and reviewing speed limits according to the design capabilities of the roadway.
› Designing and installing traffic calming devices to reduce speeds in residential areas.
› Reducing speed limits in high-risk locations such as outside schools and around worksites.
› Enforcing speed limits through ACT Policing patrols and the ACT Safety Camera Program.
› Implementing awareness campaigns to encourage all road users to respect the speed limit.

Speed limits are the maximum travel speed for any road.
The Problem

There are nearly 30 crashes per day in Canberra, and speed is a significant factor in many of these crashes.

Most Canberrans are aware of the dangers of speeding, and are slowing down. However, some drivers are still not paying attention or consider that driving a little over the speed limit is quite “safe”.

Speed surveys undertaken by Roads ACT in 2010 indicated that traffic speeds were contained within the posted limit at only about 35% of the surveyed sites, and that average speeds on many residential streets continue to be higher than the 50km/h default speed limit.

Speeding increases:
- the risk of a crash happening, and
- the severity of injuries sustained when a crash does occur.

Speeding increases the likelihood that a driver will:
- lose control of the vehicle,
- fail to anticipate oncoming hazards, and
- cause other road users to misjudge the speed of the vehicle.

Speeding puts other road users at risk as well as the speeding driver, saves little time on our roads, and costs lives.

Speed and Crash Risk

The risk of a crash occurring increases significantly even with small increases in speed.

Research shows that speeds 5km/h above average in urban areas and 10km/h above average in rural areas double the risk of a casualty crash.

For example, in a 60km/h speed limit area, the risk of involvement in a casualty crash doubles with each 5km/h increase in travelling speed above 60km/h.

Low-level speeding is very common in the ACT, and accounts for a substantial proportion of the crashes that occur on our roads.

Speeding increases the risk of a crash occurring by dramatically increasing
- the distance travelled during the driver’s reaction time, and
- the distance needed to stop – the vehicle braking distance.

When you double the speed of a car, the distance travelled while reacting to a problem doubles and the braking distance quadruples; hence, the faster you travel, the longer it will take for you to stop.

Speed and Stopping Distances

Speed and Crash Severity

Speeding increases the severity of a crash.

All moving vehicles have kinetic energy, and this energy increases exponentially with its speed. When a crash occurs, part of this energy will be absorbed by the vulnerable human body. Therefore, the chances of surviving a crash decrease rapidly with higher speeds.

Research confirms that small reductions in average speeds can result in substantially greater percentage reductions in deaths and injuries.

Changes in Casualties due to changes in Speed

Source: Australian Transport Safety Bureau Report CR 207

Source: National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020

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