



Number E 1060.00

Signature on File:

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Secretary of Transportation

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Director of Traffic Operations

Speed Limit Reductions in Work Zones

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

This Secretary's Executive Order, *Speed Limit Reductions in Work Zones* E 1060.00, directs Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) employees to design and operate work zones at the existing speed limit to maintain mobility and safety. Reduced speed limits in work zones may only be considered when exceptional circumstances exist that cannot be addressed by design solutions.

B. Supersession

This Secretary's Executive Order supersedes Directive D 55-20, *Reduced Speed in Maintenance and Construction Zones*, dated May 10, 1984.

C. What Has Changed

A new policy emphasis is created to provide for consistent application of work zone speed limit reductions that send a clear and credible message to drivers. The formatting is updated.

II. Secretary's Executive Order

WSDOT employees are directed to design and operate work zones so that the existing posted speed limit is not reduced. Work zones that have unique design and safety issues that can only be addressed through a speed limit reduction will be considered for approval and implementation in accordance with this Secretary's Executive Order.

III. Speed Limit Reductions in Work Zones Guidelines

A. Overview

In combination with the *Traffic Manual* M 51-02, Chapter 5, Appendix 5B, these guidelines provide regions with a process to evaluate whether or not a work zone speed limit reduction is necessary.

Work zone speed limit reductions are divided into three categories: 1) continuous regulatory speed limit reduction; 2) variable regulatory speed limit reduction; and 3) advisory speed reduction. Reduced speed limit boundaries are set at the work zone limits or for that portion of the work zone where conditions justify the speed reduction.

B. Approvals

1. Region Administrator

The Region Administrator shall approve or deny continuous and/or variable speed limit reductions in work zones as provided in RCW 47.48 and this Secretary's Executive Order. This authority may be delegated to the Region Traffic Engineer.

2. Region Traffic Engineer

The Region Traffic Engineer shall:

- a. Review requests for regulatory speed limit reductions and provide a recommendation to the Region Administrator.
- b. Approve a traffic control plan (TCP) when speed limit reductions in work zones are necessary.
- c. Approve advisory speed reductions.
- d. Approve the speed limit reduction work sheet.

3. State Traffic Engineer

The State Traffic Engineer shall:

- a. Approve a continuous regulatory speed limit reduction of more than 10 mph on any route and any reduction to less than 60 mph on freeways.

- b. Approve a speed limit reduction that is unique and not otherwise specifically covered by this Secretary's Executive Order.

C. Required Documents and Notices

1. Traffic Control Plan

A traffic control plan (TCP) approved by the Region Traffic Engineer is required for work zones when speed limit reductions are necessary. The TCP must include:

- a. Location of existing and proposed speed limit signs integrated into the work zone traffic control design.
- b. Location of advance warning speed limit signs.
- c. Location of speed limit signs to resume the existing speed limit.
- d. Specifications for covering or removing existing speed limits signs. Variable regulatory speed limit reduction may use a "typical" TCP to provide for sign placement or covering on a daily basis.
- e. Considerations of existing adjacent speed limits to avoid abrupt, short, separate speed zones. See the *Traffic Manual* M 51-02, Chapter 5, Appendix 5B.

2. Speed Limit Reduction Work Sheet

A speed limit reduction work sheet approved by the Region Traffic Engineer is required for any regulatory speed limit reduction. The process for completing the work sheet is described in the *Traffic Manual* M 51-02, Chapter 5, Appendix 5B.

3. Public Notice of Reduced Speed Limit

Publishing and posting a *Notice of Reduced Regulatory Speed Limit* is required in accordance with RCW 47.48.020. See the *Traffic Manual* M 51-02, Chapter 5, Appendix 5B.

4. **Notice to the Headquarters Traffic Office**

- a. A notice to the Headquarters Traffic Office is required when establishing a continuous regulatory speed limit reduction of 10 mph hour or less. Notice is sent by memorandum or email with copies of the approved speed limit reduction work sheet and traffic control plan attached.
- b. No notice to the Headquarter Traffic Office is required when establishing a variable regulatory speed limit reduction, advisory speed limit reduction, or a speed limit reduction listed below in D. Operational Exceptions.

5. **Notice to District Office of the Washington State Patrol**

A notice to the district office of the Washington State Patrol is required for any speed limit reduction. Notice is sent by memorandum and must include the types of reductions, approximate dates, and any plans to coordinate speed enforcement. A follow up notice is required to confirm dates or other details.

D. Operational Exceptions

Design requirements for determining reduced speed limits in work zones must be met. However, the five operational exceptions defined below do not require Headquarters Traffic Office approval or notification.

1. **Bituminous Surface Treatment (BST/Chip Seal) Work Zones**

Bituminous surface treatment (BST/Chip Seal) work zone speed limits are 35 mph until the roadway is in suitable condition to return to the original speed limit.

2. **Traffic Detours on Temporary Roadway Alignment**

For traffic detours on temporary roadway alignments, work zone speed limits are set in a manner consistent with design and safe operation standards. See the *Design Manual M 22-01*, Chapter 1010, Work Zone Safety and Mobility.

3. **Temporary Traffic Signals**

The design of work zones with temporary traffic signals, minimum roadway geometrics, and temporary operational aspects may require a regulatory speed limit reduction as shown on the approved traffic control plan.

4. **Emergencies**

Emergencies such as natural disasters and long-term incidents may require emergency continuous regulatory speed limit reductions in the work zones.

5. **Unprotected Workers**

Every effort should be made to include positive protection such as truck mounted attenuators (TMAs) and temporary barriers as part of the work zone design. Work zones that are of short duration or provide for moving work operations, such as paving, are usually not compatible with providing positive protection or separation throughout the complete work zone. During work hours when unprotected worker conditions exist, a variable regulatory work zone speed limit reduction may be used as part of an overall worker safety strategy. See the *Traffic Manual* M 51-02, Chapter 5, Appendix 5B, for more information.

E. Region Responsibility and Implementation

The regions shall integrate this Secretary's Executive Order into the appropriate region program responsibilities. Region managers shall ensure that an appropriate level of attention and resources are applied to effectively implement this policy.

IV. References

- Federal Highway Administration, Part VI of the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD)
www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/mutcd.htm
- Federal Regulations 23 CFR Part 630 Subpart J
http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/resources/final_rule.htm
- Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 47.48 *Closing highways and restricting traffic*
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=47.48>
- *Construction Manual* M 41-01
www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/m41-01.htm

- *Design Manual M 22-01*
www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/m22-01.htm
- *Maintenance Manual M 51-01*
www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/m51-01.htm
- *Traffic Manual M 51-02*
www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/m51-02.htm
- *Work Zone Traffic Control Guidelines M 54-44*
www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/m54-44.htm

V. Executive Review and Update Requirements

All executives are responsible for informing the Assistant Secretary of Engineering and Regional Operations of changes needed for the maintenance of this document.

The Assistant Secretary of Engineering and Regional Operations is responsible for periodic review and updates to this document for review and approval by the Secretary of Transportation.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information

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