

Department of Transportation

DIRECTIVE

D 55-20

Effective Date:

May 10, 1984

/s/ A. D. Andreas
Assistant Secretary for Highways

Reduced Speed in Maintenance and Construction Zones

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

To provide guidance for the determination of reduced regulatory speed limit and/or an advisory speed in a maintenance or construction zone.

B. Supersession

D 55-20, "Reduced Speed in Maintenance and Construction Zones," May 11, 1981.

C. References

1. D 01-01, "Delegation of Authority."
2. M 41-01, "Construction Manual."
3. M 22-01, "Design Manual."
4. M 21-01, "Standard Plans for Road and Bridge Construction."
5. M 41-10, "Standard Specifications for Road, Bridge and Municipal Construction."
6. M 24-01, "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways."
7. D 55-82, "Approval of Traffic Regulations."

II. Rules

- A. Reduced speeds may be needed in construction or maintenance areas for the safe operation of vehicular traffic. Because the incidence of conditions that require reduced speeds within a construction or maintenance area vary by the time of day and day of week, advisory speed signs are to be used to the maximum extent possible. A regulatory speed limit is to be used when accepted traffic engineering practices identify the need for a lower speed limit.
- B. District Administrators may post advisory speeds where and/or when necessary for the safe operation of the motorist's vehicle as determined by accepted traffic engineering practices. Advisory speed signs shall be in place only on those days that construction or maintenance activities require the advisory speed. If the hazardous conditions requiring the advisory speeds are removed or corrected, the advisory speed signs are to be removed covered, or turned away from traffic.
- C. District Administrators are delegated authority to establish a reduced regulatory speed limit, provided:
 - 1. The conditions are one or more of the following:
 - a. Personnel are working on, or immediately adjacent to, the travel lanes; or,
 - b. Equipment is being operated on, or immediately adjacent to, the travel lanes; or,
 - c. An edge of pavement drop-off, or other pavement surface or edge of pavement condition, exists that justifies a reduced regulatory speed; or,
 - d. Lane widths are decreased because of a traffic barrier along or near the edge of the travel lane; or,
 - e. Other conditions that are considered to require a regulatory speed limit shall be discussed with the Headquarters Traffic Engineer prior to implementation.
 - 2. It is effective only on those days that one or more of the above conditions exist. If conditions requiring the reduced regulatory speeds are removed or corrected, the reduced regulatory speed limit signs shall be removed, covered, or turned away from traffic.
 - 3. The need is determined by an engineering and traffic investigation made in accordance with accepted traffic engineering practices.
 - a. This investigation shall be based on design plans and/or field investigations, as appropriate.
 - b. For projects of significant duration (e.g., longer than two weeks) a follow-up traffic engineering investigation shall be conducted to determine what adjustments, if any, are needed to the reduced regulatory speed limit.

4. It is not used as a warning device as it has no warning connotation and does not advise motorists of hazards which may be encountered.
- D. The District Administrator should install advance warning signs to advise motorists of the roadway conditions or construction and maintenance activities that result in the posting of the reduced advisory speeds and/or regulatory speed limit ahead. Beyond the work area, signing should indicate the end of the activities that produced the need for the reduced speeds.
- E. A notice of reduced regulatory speed limit is to be published and posted as required, by [RCW 47.48.020](#). (See Appendix 1.)
- F. The Maintenance and Operations Office is to be advised of the established reduced regulatory speed limit by memorandum with copy of the applicable traffic engineering investigative report attached.
- G. The applicable District Office of the Washington State Patrol is to be advised of reduced regulatory speed limit by copy of the memorandum required in Paragraph F.

III. **Appendix**

1. [RCW 47.48](#).

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Appendix 1

Chapter 47.48, CLOSING HIGHWAYS AND RESTRICTING TRAFFIC

Chapter 47.48 CLOSING HIGHWAYS AND RESTRICTING TRAFFIC

Sections	
47.48.010	Closure or restriction authorized—Restricting use of portion of highway to urban public transportation system use.
47.48.020	Notice of closure or restriction—Emergency closure.
47.48.031	Emergency closures by state patrol.
47.48.040	Penalty.
47.48.050	Transportation of radioactive or hazardous cargo— Definition—Violation, penalty.

Closure of Camas slough: RCW 88.28.055.

47.48.010 Closure or restriction authorized—Restricting use of portion of highway to urban public transportation system use. Whenever the condition of any state highway, county road, or city street, either newly or previously constructed, altered, repaired or improved, or any part thereof is such that for any reason its unrestricted use or continued use by vehicles or by any class of vehicles will greatly damage such state highway, county road, or city street or will be dangerous to traffic thereon or the same is being constructed, altered, repaired, improved, or maintained in such a manner as to require that use of such state highway, county road, or city street or any portion thereof be closed or restricted as to all vehicles or any class of vehicles for any period of time, the director of highways if it be a state highway, the county commissioners if it be a county road, or the governing body of any city or town if it be a city street, is authorized to close such state highway, county road, or city street, as the case may be, to travel by all vehicles or by any class of vehicles, or may declare a lower maximum speed thereon for any class of vehicles, for such a definite period as they shall determine: *Provided*, That nothing in the law of this state shall prevent the director of highways, county commissioners, or governing body of any city or town from classifying vehicles according to gross weight, axle weight, height, width, length, braking area, performance, vehicle combinations, or tire equipment for the purposes of this section, or from restricting the use of any portion of any state highway, county road, or city street, as the case may be, to its use by an urban public transportation system. [1977 ex.s. c 216 § 1; 1967 c 108 § 9; 1961 c 13 § 47.48.010. Prior: 1937 c 53 § 65; RRS § 6400-65; prior: 1929 c 214 § 1; 1927 c 232 § 1; 1921 c 21 § 1; RRS § 6839.]

Reviser's note: Powers, duties, and functions of director of highways transferred to department of transportation; see RCW 47.01.031. Term "director of highways" means secretary of transportation; see RCW 47.04.015.

Urban public transportation system defined: RCW 47.04.082.

47.48.020 Notice of closure or restriction—Emergency closure. Before any state highway, county road, or city street is closed to, or the maximum speed limit thereon reduced for, all vehicles or any class of vehicles, a notice thereof including the effective date shall be published in one issue of a newspaper of general circulation in the county or city or town in which such state highway, county road, or city street or any portion thereof to be closed is located; and a like notice shall be posted on or prior to the date of publication of such notice in a conspicuous place at each end of the state highway, county road, or city street or portion thereof to be closed or restricted: *Provided*, That no such state highway, county road, or city street or portion thereof may be closed sooner than three days after the publication and the posting of the notice herein provided for: *Provided, however*, That in cases of emergency or conditions in which the maximum time the closure will be in effect is twelve hours or less the proper officers may, without publication or delay, close state highways, county roads, and city streets temporarily by posting notices at each end of the closed portion thereof and at all intersecting state highways if the closing be of a portion of a state highway, at all intersecting state highways and county roads if the closing be a portion of a county road, and at all intersecting city streets if the closing be of a city street. In all emergency cases or conditions in which the maximum time the closure will be in effect is twelve hours or less, as herein provided, the orders of the proper authorities shall be immediately effective. [1982 c 145 § 5; 1977 ex.s. c 216 § 2; 1961 c 13 § 47.48.020. Prior: 1937 c 53 § 66, part; RRS § 6400-66 part; prior: 1921 c 21 § 2, part; RRS § 6840, part. Formerly RCW 47.48.020 and 47.48.030.]

47.48.031 Emergency closures by state patrol. (1) Whenever the chief or another officer of the state patrol determines on the basis of a traffic investigation that an emergency exists or less than safe road conditions exist due to human-caused or natural disasters or extreme weather conditions upon any state highway, or any part thereof, state patrol officers may determine and declare closures and temporarily reroute traffic from any such affected highway.

(2) Any alteration of vehicular traffic on any state highway due to closure in emergency conditions is effective until such alteration has been approved or altered by the secretary of transportation or other department of transportation authorities in their local respective jurisdictions.

(3) All state highway closures by officers of the state patrol shall be immediately reported to the secretary of transportation and to other authorities in their local jurisdictions. [1981 c 197 § 1.]

47.48.040 Penalty. When any state highway, county road, or city street or portion thereof shall have been closed, or when the maximum speed limit thereon shall have been reduced, for all vehicles or any class of vehicles, as by law provided, any person, firm or corporation disregarding such closing or reduced speed limit shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall in addition to any penalty for violation of the provisions of this section, be liable in any civil action instituted in the name of the state of Washington or the county or city or town having jurisdiction for any damages occasioned to such state highway, county road, or city street, as the case may be, as the result of disregarding such closing or reduced speed limit. [1977 ex.s. c 216 § 3; 1961 c 13 § 47.48-.040. Prior: 1937 c 53 § 67; RRS § 6400-67; prior: 1921 c 21 § 3; RRS § 6841.]

47.48.050 Transportation of radioactive or hazardous cargo—Definition—Violation, penalty. The chief or other officer of the Washington state patrol may prohibit the transportation of placarded radioactive or hazardous cargo over the highways of the state, or a portion thereof, if weather or other conditions create a substantial risk to public safety. For the purposes of this section hazardous cargo shall mean hazardous materials as defined in RCW 70.136.020(1). Violation of an order issued under this section constitutes a misdemeanor. [1983 c 205 § 1.]

*Regulations on notice of prohibition on radioactive or hazardous cargo:
RCW 47.01.270.*