

When Others Are Speeding

Traffic deaths increased 52 percent on rural interstate highways when speed limits were raised to 65 miles per hour. Deaths on highways that kept the old 55 mile speed limit declined by 10 percent during the same period, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Speed kills. When the driver is the cause of a fatal accident (as opposed to the vehicle or road being the cause) speed is usually a factor.

Keep Up With the Flow

Sometimes you speed when you don't really want to. Often the problem is that everyone else is driving too fast. When you slow down to the posted speed limit, the traffic bears down on you. What can you do in a situation like this?

Keep up with the flow. Although moving at the speed limit may make you right, moving five miles per hour less than the rest of the traffic creates a hazard that makes you wrong. Sure, it's annoying when you're obeying the law and everyone else is breaking it, but it's a lot safer to switch than fight. Accidents at high speeds are usually fatal.

Suppose you do your best to keep up with the flow, but it's just too fast for comfort. Try moving into the right-hand lane. Traffic in the right lane normally moves more slowly than other lanes because vehicles are getting on and off the freeway here.

When to Get Off

If you find that even the right lane is moving too

fast, take the next exit and get off the freeway. It's better to find an alternate route than to drive faster than feels safe. You may arrive at your destination a little later, but you'll arrive in one piece and in a better mood.

Traffic patterns vary a great deal according to the time of day, time of year, weather and other factors. That's why it's a good idea to plan an alternate route when you set out in your vehicle. A backup plan can save the day when traffic gets crazy.

If you feel unsafe driving in heavy freeway traffic or in dense urban areas, it's okay. Admit your concerns to yourself and your family. There are almost always alternate routes and methods of transportation. These may sometimes seem less convenient than driving, but if they're safer, they're better.

The Rewards of Obeying Limits

Speed limits are there for good reason: to protect you from heavy traffic, side roads, pedestrians, poor visibility, rough roads and curves. Driving within posted limits not only saves lives, it can save money, especially if driving a smaller car.

At 40 miles per hour, a small car gets 15 more miles to the gallon than a larger automobile. At 70 miles per hour, the small car gets only 8.7 more miles to the gallon than the bigger model. When you're tempted to drive too fast, think of the gas (not to mention the lives) you may save by staying within the posted limit.