



Driving on the Right Side of the Road Speeding



JUST THE FACTS:

NATIONALLY:

- Speeding is one of the most widespread factors contributing to traffic crashes. Speeding is the third leading contributing factor to traffic crashes.¹
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), a crash is speeding-related if the driver was charged with a speeding-related offense or if an officer indicated that racing, driving too fast for conditions, or exceeding the posted speed limit was a contributing factor in the crash.²
- Speeding was a contributing factor in about one out of three (32%) fatal crashes in 2010.³
- In 2010, 10,395 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes.⁴
- NHTSA estimates that the annual economic cost to society of speeding-related crashes is \$40.4 billion.⁵ Every minute “gained” by speeding to a destination costs U.S. society over \$76,000.⁶
- Young males are the most likely to speed. In 2010, 39% of male drivers in the 15- to 24-year-old age group involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash.⁷
- Alcohol involvement is common for drivers involved in speeding-related crashes. In 2010, 42% of speeding drivers had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher in fatal crashes.⁸
- In 2010, 27% of the speeding drivers under age 21 who were involved in a fatal crashes also had a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher.
- Motorcycles involved in fatal crashes are the most likely to be speeding of all vehicle types. In 2010, 35% of all motorcycles involved in fatal crashes were speeding, compared to 23% for passenger cars, 19% for light trucks, and 8% for large trucks.⁹
- In 2010, only 53% of speeding passenger vehicle drivers under age 21 who were involved in fatal crashes were wearing seat belts at the time of the crash. In contrast, 75% of non-speeding drivers in the same age group were restrained.¹⁰
- Surveys find that although people name speeding as a threat to their safety when other drivers around them are speeding, the majority say they also speed when driving.¹¹
- According to *Focus on Safety: A Practical Guide to Automated Traffic Enforcement*,¹² drivers speed because:
 - They’re in a hurry.
 - They’re inattentive to their driving.
 - They don’t take traffic laws seriously; they don’t think the laws apply to them.
 - They don’t view their driving behavior as dangerous.
 - They don’t expect to get caught.
 - Some or all of the above.

IN TEXAS:

- In 2011, there were 708 speeding-related traffic fatalities in Texas. There were also 7,937 speeding-related serious injuries.¹³
- There were 24,491 speed-related crashes in Texas in 2011.¹⁴
- Speeding was a contributing factor in 40% of all fatal crashes in Texas in 2010.¹⁵
- Texas has the highest speed limit in the county. On a toll road near Austin, the speed limit is 85 miles per hour.¹⁶

IT'S THE LAW:

- The basic speed rule in Texas is that no person shall drive a vehicle at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the circumstances then existing or under the conditions and having regard to actual and potential hazards.¹⁷ In addition, no person shall drive so slowly as to impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic.¹⁸
- Operating a vehicle in excess of the following speed limits is *prima facie* evidence that such speed is not reasonable and prudent and is unlawful:¹⁹
 - 70 MPH during the daytime on “numbered” highways and farm/ranch-to-market roads outside an urban district.²⁰
 - 65 MPH during the nighttime on “numbered” highways and farm/ranch-to-market roads outside an urban district.²¹
 - 60 MPH during the daytime on highways that are not “numbered” and that are outside of an urban district.²²
 - 55 MPH during the nighttime on highways that are not “numbered” and that are outside of an urban district.²³
 - 30 MPH in an urban district.²⁴
 - 15 MPH in an alley.²⁵
 - 15 MPH on a beach.²⁶
- All speed law violations are misdemeanors.²⁷
- A fine for a speeding violation can range from \$1 to \$200.²⁸ If a speeding offense occurs in a construction zone, the minimum and maximum fines are doubled.²⁹
- Except for speeding more than 25 MPH over the speed limit, persons charged with traffic offenses may be allowed to participate in a deferred disposition program. Under this program, an offender must plead guilty or no contest to the offense and complete a driving safety course. The court defers imposition of judgment for 180 days and dismisses the charge when the course has been completed.³⁰

KEEP IT SAFE:

- Leave earlier so you don't feel rushed.
- Pay close attention to the speedometer, while still carefully watching the road.
- Drive under the speed limit.
- Going slower gets you better gas mileage.
- Your vehicle will get the best gas mileage at speeds between 30 and 60 miles per hour, according to the Department of Energy.
- Use the “cruise control” option if your car has it.
- Figure out the fine amount for speeding. As you find yourself going too fast, mentally calculate how much that ticket would cost you. Tickets can easily reach \$400, and you don't want to spend that much money. So think twice before speeding.
- Figure out just how much time you save by speeding. It is probably much less than you think: going 65 miles per hour in a 55 zone for 15 miles “saves” less than three minutes. Five over saves less than 90 seconds.
- Listen to classical or light music instead of hard rock. The soft music will help you relax and slow down.
- Make sure your car is just at a comfortable temperature. If not, you may rush just to get out of that “uncomfortable” car.
- Do not drink and drive.

What Other Safety Tips Can You Suggest?

¹ National Safety Council (NSC), Speeding, retrieved January 18, 2013, at http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/DriverSafety/Pages/Speeding.aspx (hereinafter *NSC, Speeding*).

² National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Traffic Safety Facts, 2010 Data, *Speeding*, DOT HS 811 636, <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811636.pdf> (hereinafter *Speeding*).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *NSC, Speeding.*

⁷ *Speeding.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *NSC, Speeding.*

¹² National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running, *Focus on Safety: A Practical Guide to Automated Traffic Enforcement*, retrieved January 18, 2013, at http://www.stopredlightrunning.com/pdfs/WEBONLY_Red%20Light%20Book.pdf.

¹³ Texas Department of Transportation, *Speed Involved Crashes and Injuries by County*, retrieved January 18, 2013, at http://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/trf/crash_statistics/2011/21_2011.pdf.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Speeding.*

¹⁶ Associated Press, *Texas Approves Highest Speed Limit In Country At 85 MPH*, CBS HOUSTON, September 7, 2012, available at <http://houston.cbslocal.com/2012/09/07/texas-approves-highest-speed-limit-in-country-at-85-mph/>.

¹⁷ Tex. Tran. Code § 545.351(a) & (b)(1).

¹⁸ Tex. Tran. Code § 545.363(a).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Tex. Tran. Code § 545.352(b)(2).

²¹ *Id.*

²² Tex. Tran. Code § 545.352(b)(3).

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Tex. Tran. Code § 545.352(b)(1).

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Tex. Tran. Code § 545.352(b)(5).

²⁷ Tex. Tran. Code § 542.301 & 750.002(b).

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ Tex. Tran. Code § 542.404.

³⁰ Code of Criminal Procedure, Art. 45.541.