

Speeding

Just a little bit over the limit?

It's virtually impossible to drive for years and not slip over the speed limit a little from time to time. The problem is that speeding does increase your chances of crashing. Research shows that a driver doubles their chances of crashing for every 5 kilometres per hour over the speed limit they travel.

A little known fact is that it takes around four times the amount of energy to double your speed. The reverse is also true. It takes around four times further to stop as your speed doubles. This means that only a few kilometres per hour over the speed limit will make a significant difference to your ability to stop in an emergency.

A line in the sand

It's important to remember that speed limits are arbitrarily set for the best conditions.

So a 60 kph limit is based on the maximum speed with everything in your favour. If there are pedestrians around, its dark or wet, or if traffic is heavy, it's safer to travel at lower speeds. Travelling at the maximum speed limit is not, of itself, a good way to determine the safest way to drive in the prevailing conditions.

Who draws the line in the sand?

Most people would reasonably expect drivers to slow down near schools. In fact 40 kph zones near schools have become the norm in eastern states over the last few years. Did you know that in South Australia the speed limit near schools with pedestrian activity is 25 kph?

So which is safe 25kph or 40kph? The truth is that neither is safe. But travelling slower does give drivers a much better chance to stop in an emergency. It also makes a big difference to injuries if we get it wrong and crash.

Speed limits are set as the result of a political process; they are not based solely on what is safest.

Here's the challenge

As roads get better, and cars become easier to drive, it's normal to want to travel a little faster. It is true that sometimes speeding up might be the safest choice.

On the whole however, safer drivers usually choose to drive a little slower, not faster.

Fast
Street

