




Model Community Speed Control Program



With the repeal of the National Maximum Speed Limit, states can enact higher speed limits on their roadways. This means that motorists may be driving faster than before, which may result in higher speeds on roads where speed limits have not changed. Communities will be looking for ways to keep speed-related traffic crashes down, while setting higher limits.

ESTABLISH A MODEL COMMUNITY SPEED CONTROL PROGRAM

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this Model Community Speed Control Program is to assist managers of police traffic units with an example of an effective and efficient approach to control speed and the associated crash problems in their community. This approach employs techniques used in sobriety checkpoints, which have gained wide public acceptance as a fair and effective means to control impaired driving.

Speeding, as a primary collision factor in fatal and serious injury crashes, is a growing problem at the community level. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), about 30 percent of all drivers killed in crashes were speeding.

The increasing demand for police services, coupled with limited law enforcement resources, is creating difficult challenges for law enforcement administrators. The substantial increases in the number of registered vehicles, vehicle miles traveled, licensed drivers, and population over the last decade have far exceeded the growth of police resources. Furthermore, police resources for traffic enforcement are frequently being reassigned to fight drugs and crime. Therefore, there is a need to use an approach that can maximize the impact of speed enforcement using existing staff and resources, and simultaneously gain widespread community support.

The four major phases of this model program are:

- ▶ Crash and Speed Assessment;
- ▶ Community Speed Problem Awareness;
- ▶ Systematic Speed Enforcement; and
- ▶ Program Evaluation.

PHASE 1: CRASH AND SPEED ASSESSMENT

In this phase, areas with a high incidence of speed-related crashes are identified. Although the ideal situation would be to deploy personnel to these sites for concentrated enforcement, this may not be an efficient use of available resources. Typically, the highest 10 to 12 speed-related crash areas are targeted for extra enforcement. This is usually a manageable number for supervisors, and it permits efficient use of personnel and equipment. Often these same 10 to 12 areas have received highly visible attention in the media because of their crash problems, which can help with the awareness efforts.

Law enforcement alone can not solve the speed-related crash problem. There are a number of key people needed to put together a model program.

- ▶ **City managers** are needed to give support for increased enforcement. This shows the community that the enforcement program is important and endorsed by the city's leadership.
- ▶ **Traffic engineers** are important, too. They help identify physical factors that may be contributing to the crashes. Increased lighting, added pavement markings, or new or different signing may be all that is necessary to reduce crashes. Traffic engineers also determine speed distributions, which are needed to see the overall speed problem. Some state laws require that speed distributions be done every three to five years to justify the use of Radar at specific locations.

In some communities, speed awareness must precede enforcement. In this case, the schedule would carry out the public information plan described in Phase 2.

PHASE 2: COMMUNITY SPEED AWARENESS

In this phase, the motoring public will be informed of the community speed problem, the plan for speed enforcement, and some specifics as to speed enforcement locations. Providing reasonably specific information to the public concerning enforcement efforts has worked quite well in those communities where law enforcement uses sobriety checkpoints. Published reports have confirmed that the public believes there is a sense of fairness about this approach when compared to one that is essentially random. Therefore, a public information plan should be developed that defines the message, how it is to be communicated, and the schedule of activities to be used in the program.

One of the easiest ways to publicize the speed enforcement program and to insure that the target area is informed of your proposed enforcement activity is to use visible display Radar trailers in the time just before the speed enforcement component. In these situations, the trailers display a sign that says "Speed Enforcement Zone."

PHASE 3: SYSTEMATIC SPEED ENFORCEMENT

When the sites are determined and analyzed, then a systematic speed enforcement plan is developed. This enforcement plan is important to the phase when the problem and enforcement actions are publicized. An enforcement plan may be as simple as a matrix where the targeted road segments are listed along with a schedule of when speed enforcement will take place. The assessment effort should result in a plan of action that efficiently and systematically uses available resources to obtain maximum impact.

It is important to have a plan to systematically apply the resources throughout the community. Some communities can provide speed enforcement on a daily basis, while others may only be able to provide speed enforcement weekly. By having a plan, there is a better chance that the enforcement effort will become known throughout the community even without publicity.

Implementation of the speed enforcement

plan could include the use of Radar, VASCAR, Lidar, aerial enforcement, and photo Radar. The key to making an impact in the community is to follow the enforcement and public information plans.

PHASE 4: PROGRAM EVALUATION

Documentation of the results of the enforcement plan should be maintained to advise the community of the benefits of the effort. This documentation is also useful to help plan future programs. The number of citations issued may not be a good measure of program success. Perhaps the best measure of a successful program may be a reduction in speed-related crashes along with a high degree of public support. This information should be fed back to the staff that developed the initial enforcement plan so modifications can be made to achieve maximum success.

HOW NHTSA CAN HELP

If you are interested in this program, NHTSA offers free materials on the following topics:

- ▶ Strategies for the systematic application of police resources;
- ▶ Ideas for developing enforcement plans;
- ▶ Information on the latest technology for speed enforcement;
- ▶ Radar training course curricula;
- ▶ Public information courses and materials for law enforcement; and
- ▶ Methods for program evaluation and assessment.

Contact your NHTSA Regional Office for more information.

