

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Julie Plocinik
609-777-2600

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GOVERNOR GIVES GREEN LIGHT ON 65 M.P.H. SPEED LIMIT 18-MONTH TRIAL PERIOD BEGINS TOMORROW

Gov. Christie Whitman today unveiled New Jersey's new 65 m.p.h. roadway signs and stressed the state's plans for strict enforcement and increased penalties for speeders during a stop on the Atlantic City Expressway in Atlantic City. The 18-month trial period for the new 65 m.p.h. speed limit begins tomorrow on designated highways throughout New Jersey.

"As we prepare to implement this trial program, the safety of New Jersey motorists is our paramount concern," said Gov. Whitman. "By increasing the speed limit on a trial basis, we are taking a thoughtful and sensible approach. Motorists need to know that strict enforcement and a crack-down on aggressive driving are part of the law. Penalties for speeding and other violations are sharply increased for speeding in a 65 m.p.h. zone."

"The primary concern as this trial program begins is motorist safety. We moved carefully and deliberately to identify roads on which it was appropriate to increase the speed limit -- looking only at controlled access highways that were modern, had appropriate traffic volumes and were designed to handle a speed of 65 m.p.h.," said Transportation Commissioner John J. Haley, Jr. "Hundreds of signs along the designated roadways have been installed to make drivers aware that they are entering and leaving the new 65 m.p.h. zones, and that fines for speeding and other violations in the new zones have been doubled."

Beginning tomorrow at 12:01 a.m., the increased speed limit will be in effect on selected roadways for an 18-month trial period, during which the effects of the increased speed limit will be evaluated. At the conclusion of the trial period, the Commissioner of Transportation, in consultation with the Attorney General, will submit a report on the effects of the increase and make recommendations for any necessary improvements to the law.

The effects of the increased speed limit will be evaluated based upon the following five criteria:

- Accident data from within the increased zones, to be compared with data on the same road from before the increase and also with data from similar roadways where the speed limit was not increased.
- A review of changes in traffic volume in the increased zones.
- A review of the actual speeds traveled in the increased zones.
- Enforcement statistics provided by the State Police
- Environmental impacts of the increase - such as air quality and noise level

Roadways effected by the trial program include: Route 18, Route 55, I-78, I-80, I-195, I-287, I-295 the New Jersey Turnpike, the Garden State Parkway and the Atlantic City Expressway. A detailed list of road segments to be included is attached.

Attorney General Peter Verniero said that "New Jersey is committed to enforcing all traffic laws, including the new 65 m.p.h. speed limit."

Colonel Carl A. Williams, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, said that while New Jersey's maximum speed limit is now 65 m.p.h. on designated highways, drivers should not "roll the dice" and exceed the posted speed limit. Williams noted that the State Police will have a very visible presence and that additional patrols of marked State Police vehicles will be on the highways enforcing the speed limit.