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 **Department of Transport**  
*An Roinn Iompair*



**To each City and County Manager**

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

**Circular RST 02/2011**



**Direction given to road authorities by the Minister for Transport under  
Section 9(9) of the Road Traffic Act 2004:  
Guidelines for the Setting of Special Speed Limits (2010)**

**A Chara,**

This circular together with a copy of the revised ‘Guidelines for the Setting of Special Speed Limits’ 2010 constitutes a direction given by the Minister for Transport under section 9(9) of the Road Traffic Act 2004 in respect of the setting of special speed limits.

The use of speed limits has been a feature of our traffic and speed management policy for many years now. Speed limits are introduced as an aid for road safety, however experience with speed limits has clearly established that their introduction without associated speed reduction measures will not succeed.

Indeed, if a speed limit is set in isolation, or is unrealistically low, it is likely to be ineffective and lead to disrespect for the speed limit and drivers will be more inclined to choose their own speed. If limits are perceived as not being credible too often, it will also harm the trust in the speed limit system as a whole (ETSC 2010). As well as requiring significant, and avoidable enforcement costs, this may also result in substantial numbers of drivers continuing to travel at unacceptable speeds, thus increasing the risk of collisions and injuries (UK DfT Circular 01/2006).

Annex A of this circular contains the ‘Guidelines for the setting of special speeds Limits’ 2010. These guidelines replace the previous ‘Guidelines for the setting of special speed limits’ dated 2005 and as amended under

circular number RST 4/2008. The new 2010 Guidelines have been prepared by the Department of Transport and are applicable from the date of this circular.

The revised Guidelines for the setting of special speed limits 2010 address Action Number 34 of the Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012 regarding provision of technical/engineering guidance for the setting of speed limits.

In addition Annex B of this circular contains information on the 'positioning of speed limit signs at different speed limit road interfaces and examples of inappropriate locations of speed limit signs'. Together, Annex A and B will address actions 34 and 35 of the Road Safety Strategy 2007 – 2012.

## **1.0 Guidelines for the setting of special speed limits 2010**

### **1.1 Principal amendments**

The main changes contained in the 2010 guidelines for the setting of special speed limits are as follows:

- New technical engineering guidance in the form of a speed assessment framework for the setting of special speed limits on rural single carriageway roads for the situations where the setting of speed limits is unclear or ambiguous and further guidance is required to aid the decision making process.
- Provision of a new 40km/h special speed limit as provided for in the Road Traffic Act 2010 together with the associated criteria required for its use.
- Additional technical criteria provided in guidelines by road type to further assist the decision making process if roads are being considered for a change in the default speed limit.
- Contains new general updated research advice and guidance.

### **1.2 New 40km/h Special Speed Limit**

The use of the new 40km/h special speed limit regulatory sign must await the making of new Road Traffic Signs regulations which are under preparation at present. It is anticipated these regulations will be complete by Q2 2011.

## **2.0 Inappropriate locations of speed limit signs (Annex B)**

In addition to the provision of the new guidelines for the setting of special speed limits 2010, Annex B of this circular also address some of the current issues of existing inappropriate locations of speed limit signs.

The 2004 Act provides the legislative basis for speed limits and provided for the change from imperial speed limits to metric speed limits. The transition to metric speed limits occurred in early 2005. It happened very smoothly and was very successful. However, 5 years on, it is apparent



that there are improvements that can be made to some existing poor practices and inappropriate use of speed limit signs and their locations that are currently in place and have materialised since the introduction of metrication.

Annex B therefore addresses some of the issues associated with the current use of speed limit signs and gives guidance in a generic way on the proper and appropriate locations.

## **2.1 Audit of speed limits**

In accordance with action 35 of the Road Safety Strategy 2007 – 2012 the Department intends to audit the appropriateness and consistency of speed limits, in accordance with the guidelines, across the network every two years.

To this end and to assist this process, the Department requests that the following tasks be completed by the end of October 2011.

1. Road Authorities review their speed limits and speed limit sign locations
2. All speed limits in each road authority are logged on Map Road.
3. Road Authorities are requested to highlight to the Department in Table 1 of Annex B where any modifications to speed limit signs have taken place or are proposed to take place based on:
  - any change in location and/or rationalisation of speed limit signs as a result of inappropriate locations particularly those highlighted in Annex B to this circular\* and:
  - any potential change to an existing speed limit as a result of the new Guidelines for the application of speed limits 2010.

*\* Note in relation to the first bullet point above prior to removing posts consideration should first be given to whether an alternative sign might be more appropriate such as a warning or information sign.*

To facilitate any implementation of revised more appropriate speed limits the department may consider provision of a grant allocation in 2012 depending on the information provided by the road authority during 2011.

## **Uniform application of appropriate speed limits**

The Road Traffic Act 2004 as amended by the Road Traffic Act 2010 requires that where Section 9 Guidelines are in force a county council or city council must have regard to them when making special speed limit bye-laws and that a special speed limit of 30 km/h, 40 km/h, 50 km/h, 60 km/h, 80 km/h, 100 km/h and 120 km/h must only be applied in accordance with the Guidelines.

I wish to re-iterate that the focus and intent of the Section 9 Guidelines is to contribute to the establishment of a uniform and standard application of appropriate speed limits on a countrywide basis.

Road Authorities have a pivotal role to ensure that they make bye-laws that result in the deployment of special speed limits that are appropriate to the location and circumstances. As that role has been vested by the Oireachtas in the elected members of county and city councils you are requested, as was done in 2005 and 2008, to bring this circular to the notice of the members of your council and to supply each member with a copy of the enclosed Guidelines for the application of special speed limits 2010.

It is proposed to keep the Section 9 Guidelines under on-going review and to improve or augment the contents if so warranted.

**On-line publication**

The Section 9 Guidelines 2010 will also be published on the department website [www.transport.ie](http://www.transport.ie)

Thank you for your cooperation.

**Mise le meas,**



David O'Grady  
Engineering Inspector  
Road Safety Division  
Department of Transport

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