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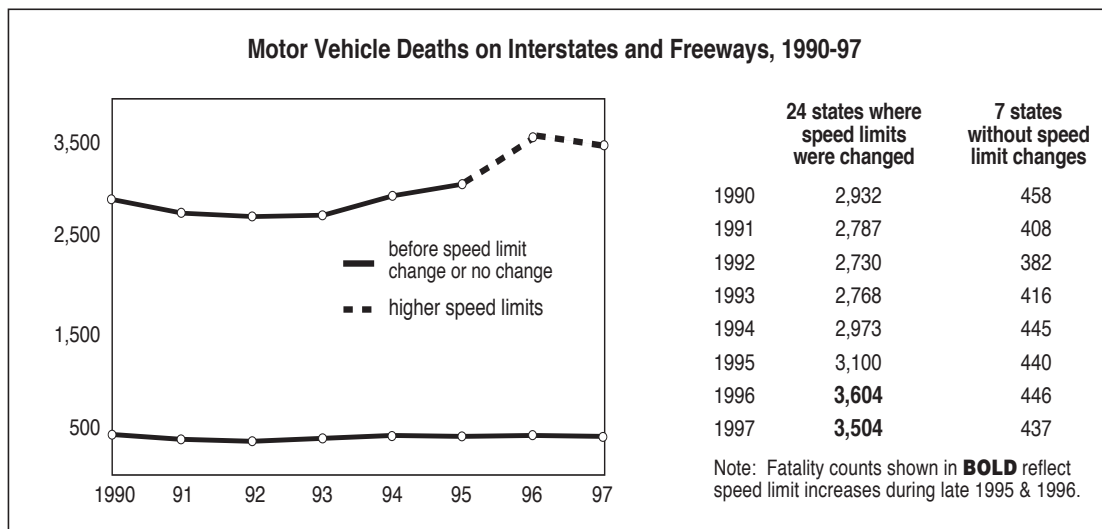
NEWS RELEASE

January 14, 1999

MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS 15 PERCENT HIGHER ON ROADS IN 24 STATES THAT RAISED SPEED LIMITS

ARLINGTON, VA – The higher speed limits introduced in 24 states during late 1995 and 1996 resulted in increased motor vehicle deaths during 1996-97. Insurance Institute for Highway Safety researchers compared the numbers of motor vehicle occupant deaths in these 24 states (see list, p.2) from the time speed limits were raised through 1997 with corresponding fatality counts for the same months in the six years before the speed limits were changed. As a control, researchers also analyzed deaths in seven states where speed limits weren't changed during the study period. To account for increases in miles traveled, analyses then were conducted using fatality rates per vehicle mile instead of fatality counts.

Based on these studies, the Institute estimates an increase in deaths on interstates and freeways of approximately 15 percent. Meanwhile, deaths didn't in-



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Speed Limit Changes in 24 States, December 1995-September 1996

	Date of Speed Limit Change	Rural Interstates		Urban Interstates/Freeways	
		Old Limit (mph)	New Limit (mph)	Old Limit (mph)	New Limit (mph)
Alabama	May 9, 1996	65	70	55	70
Arizona	December 8, 1995	65	75	55	no change
Arkansas	August 19, 1996	65	70	55	no change
California	January 7, 1996	65	70	55	65
Colorado	June 24, 1996	65	75	55	65
Georgia	July 1, 1996	65	70	55	65
Idaho	May 1, 1996	65	75	55	65
Kansas	March 7, 1996	65	70	55	70
Michigan	August 1, 1996	65	70	55	65
Mississippi	February 29, 1996	65	70	55	70
Missouri	March 13, 1996	65	70	55	60
Montana	December 8, 1995	65	none	55	none
Nebraska	June 1, 1996	65	75	55	65
Nevada	December 8, 1995	65	75	55	65
New Mexico	May 15, 1996	65	75	55	no change
North Carolina	August 5, 1996	65	70	55	65
North Dakota	June 10, 1996	65	70	55	65
Oklahoma	December 15, 1995	65	70	55	60
	August 29, 1996	70	75	60	70
Rhode Island	May 12, 1996	55	65	55	no change
South Dakota	April 1, 1996	65	75	55	65
Texas	December 8, 1995	65	70	55	70
Utah	May 1, 1996	65	75	55	65
Washington	March 15, 1996	65	70	55	60
Wyoming	December 8, 1995	65	75	55	60

Speed limits weren't changed in the following seven states:

Connecticut	55	no change	55	no change
Kentucky	65	no change	55	no change
Maine	65	no change	55	no change
New Jersey	55	no change	55	no change
Oregon	65	no change	55	no change
Vermont	65	no change	55	no change
Virginia	65	no change	55	no change

The other 19 states were excluded from analysis because of too few miles of freeway or because speed limit changes were restricted to selected segments of interstates.

crease at all on interstates and freeways in states where speed limits weren't raised. These findings expand earlier Institute research conducted in 12 states that raised speed limits beginning in December 1995. The earlier study found a 12 percent increase in deaths on roads where speed limits were raised.

Other Institute research indicates that travel speeds went up on roads in states that raised limits after Congress repealed the national maximum speed limit in late 1995. The 24 states the Institute studied raised speed limits to 70 mph or higher on rural interstates and to 60, 65, or 70 mph on urban interstates and freeways. Some states, such as Texas, raised speed limits even on two-lane highways. Montana doesn't post a numeric speed limit at all for cars during the day.

"It's clear from this study that the current round of speed limit increases — like increases on rural interstates in the 1980s — is costing hundreds of lives per year," Institute president Brian O'Neill says. "This cost could go up in the future because research shows actual speeds continue to rise in the years following a speed limit change."

Speeding reduces the time drivers have to avoid crashes. It increases the likelihood of crashing and the severity of the crashes that occur. "We know that when speed limits are raised," O'Neill says, "drivers who exceeded the old speed limits will exceed the higher limits, too, because people take note of the limits and then travel faster, at speeds at which they believe they won't get a ticket."

End 3-page release on fatality increase under higher speed limits.

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