

What speed limit?

Texas Department of Transportation poll shows drivers' ideas on speeding differ from law

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas drivers seem to have a loose interpretation of speed limits.

According to a poll released Tuesday by the Texas Department of Transportation, only 10 percent say they are speeding when they drive 10 miles over the speed limit. That goes up to 20 percent when talking to men between 16 and 24 years old.

"This means that it's important for us to set speed limits that people will obey and will get in the habit of obeying," said Phyllis Chandler, a department spokesperson.

The study, conducted by the Savitz Research Center, included a poll of 500 Texas drivers. Of those, only half felt they were speeding when they exceeded posted speed limits. And 55 percent admitted

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— Jerry Johns
President
Southwestern Insurance
Information Services

speeding "most or all" of the time. Jerry Johns, president of the Southwestern Insurance Informa-

tion Service, said the poll mirrors similar studies and the results are not surprising.

"What it says about Texans is that they have no regard for posted speed limits or the lives they could take in an accident," he said.

Johns said the poll may be an indication that the state should consider lowering speed limits.

"Given these statistics maybe local police should consider implementing a zero tolerance policy for people exceeding the speed limit," he said.

One of the most disturbing results, Chandler said, was that of the motorists polled who go out drinking, only 25 percent use a designated driver. Still, Texans say they are greatly concerned about drunk drivers and speeders, the study

found.

The transportation department released another study Tuesday about crashes along Texas highways. The number of injury crashes increased up to 33 percent more than expected in some places, although there was no "significant increase" in fatalities, according to the study.

"Yes, we know that crashes have increased across the state of Texas," said Chandler.

Lindsay Griffin, author of the study, said he constructed a formula to predict the number of the crashes expected on Texas highways using data dating back to 1991.

Based on those calculations, the number of crashes has increased significantly since the speed limit was raised to 70 mph in 1996, he said. The study reviewed crash data from

Dump opponents make last plea to Congress

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a last-ditch plea, opponents of a planned low-level radioactive waste dump in West Texas urged the Senate on Tuesday to reject a deal that would allow Maine and Vermont to ship their refuse to Texas.

With the Senate poised to vote on the Texas Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact — which would conclude congressional action on the controversial deal — more than a dozen West Texas residents and community leaders rallied outside the Capitol.

Banners unfurled and placards aloft, they pleaded for rejection of the pact, saying their voices have been ignored in Washington and the state capitals of Texas, Maine and Vermont by politicians more attuned to the desires of well-

heeled nuclear interests.

"We are the stepchildren of Texas," said Addington, a Sierra Blanca resident who has been a vocal opponent of a dump near his town. "We would house radioactive waste from decommissioned nuclear power plants, industry and military facilities."

In a bit of political theater, the "Rangers" gathered in suits and boots before television cameras to hold posters with slogans such as "Contaminate the Rio Grande" and "Dump opponents come to the Rio Grande." The state, which is impoverished and overwhelmingly Hispanic,

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