



Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

Briefing note: SIDs v SLRs

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Speed limits generally reflect a road's function and the extent of adjacent development that creates traffic and pedestrian movements. Roads passing through built up areas are generally subject to a 40mph speed limit or lower, while rural roads and roads with limited frontage development will usually have a higher limit or be subject to the applicable national speed limit. Terminal signs are placed where the speed limit changes, with repeater signs placed at intervals to confirm the prevailing speed limit (such signs can be fixed plate or a vehicle activated sign). The exception is where the road is classed as a restricted road, by virtue of the presence of street lighting and automatically subject to a 30mph speed limit.

Speed limits should be self-explanatory with drivers taking cues from the road environment, including the presence of street lighting, and with the speed limit terminal signs drawing drivers' attention to the change in environment and the need to slow down. A high degree of compliance with speed limits can be expected.

In certain circumstances, it may be necessary or desirable to set a lower speed limit than drivers might anticipate. For instance, where excess speed is identified as a contributing factor in collisions, or where there is a community consensus that a lower limit is appropriate. In these circumstances, drivers taking cues from the road environment may not slow down sufficiently, and further measures in addition to the terminal signs and any repeater signs may be needed to improve compliance.

Speed enforcement by the Police or targeted education through Community SpeedWatch schemes are options to tackle this. Increasingly, local councils and community groups are using electronic messages to help influence driver behaviour, with signs deployed in different locations for short periods (generally not exceeding one month) and with a break before being reinstated (e.g. two weeks) to maximise their value and retain their impact.

Two types of vehicle activated device to help improve compliance with speed limits are available: Speed Limit Reminder signs (SLRs) and Speed Indicator Devices (SID).

A Speed Limit Reminder sign (SLR) is activated when a threshold speed is exceeded. It then displays the speed limit sign, prompting a speeding motorist to slow down. The sign serves as a reminder of the speed limit in force. SLRs are classed as traffic signs because they display a traffic sign prescribed in the Traffic Sign Regulations and General Directions 2016 (TSRGD).

A Speed Indicator Device (SID) is activated in the same way and displays the motorist's measured speed together with a corresponding message and/or a facial image. These devices are typically activated by all vehicles rather than just those exceeding the speed limit.

Unlike SLRs, SIDs do not display the speed limit sign and do not tell the driver any more than is already displayed on a speedometer, albeit they may additionally show a face smiling or frowning. SIDs are not deemed to meet the definition of a 'traffic sign' in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984

but are instead classed as information boards. While traffic signs have deemed planning consent, information boards may require planning permission to ensure they are installed properly.

SLRs and SIDs are both generally used in built up areas, including in villages, where they serve to prompt drivers of the need to slow down. The choice of whether to purchase a SLR or SID will depend on the intended use. SLRs are generally recommended as they complement the existing speed limit signs, but SIDs may be preferred for use in Community SpeedWatch schemes. Particular consideration should be given to whether SIDs might unintentionally lead to errant behaviour by a minority of drivers seeking to record high speeds before placing these devices in less built-up locations.

Other Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) are available to advise drivers when they may be travelling too fast for the conditions rather than exceeding the speed limit. As with SLRs, these VAS display a prescribed traffic sign, typically a warning of a hazard such as a sharp bend with a message to slow down. These are likely to be a more appropriate choice outside built up areas where there is a desire to prompt drivers to slow down in relation to a specific hazard. More information on these is available in [Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/03](#).

ADEPT is a member of TOPAS (Traffic Open Products and Specifications), which provides procurement specifications for electronic traffic management and control equipment to which manufacturers may register products. Purchasers can be confident that TOPAS registered products will operate as specified and meet relevant UK regulations and standards such as Electromagnetic Compatibility Regulations 2016, Radio Equipment Regulations 2017 and Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016. TOPAS registration provides this assurance.

Where there is no TOPAS registration, purchasers will need to assure themselves and verify with manufactures that products comply with relevant UK regulations and standards. It is not sufficient to rely on CE or UKCA¹ marking for this assurance. Manufacturers will be able to provide test certificates for these products on request.

Manufacturers of SLRs and SIDs are able to register their products with TOPAS (2541A Performance Specification for Control Systems for Vehicle Activated Discontinuous Variable Messages), providing purchasers with a straightforward way to verify products comply with sign regulations and meet relevant UK standards.

¹ CE and UKCA markings are placed on certain products to show that they are compliant with the relevant regulatory requirements. UKCA has replaced CE (post Brexit) for UK products.