

Committee on Accident and Poison Prevention

The 55 Miles per Hour Maximum Speed Limit

When the 55 mph national speed limit became a law in 1973, the first significant reduction in the number of highway deaths in this country occurred. When this speed limit has been maintained, the number of automobile accident fatalities and injuries has continued to decrease. However, recent statistics¹ indicate that the legal speed limit is again being exceeded, and the number of automobile accidents are again beginning to rise.²⁻⁴ The United States is in the midst of a worse energy crisis than the one which prompted the enactment of the 55 mph speed limit in 1973, and we should be more aware of attempts to save energy as well as save lives.

The Committee published comments on the incidence of mortality and morbidity in automobile accidents and the speed limit in its 1975 and 1976-1977 newsletters.^{5,6} Because of recent statistics, the Committee wishes to reemphasize its previous statements.

The Committee strongly endorses the national, maximum speed limit of 55 mph as an effective method of lowering the incidence of automobile accidents, injuries, and fatalities. Pediatricians should make every effort to reinforce this form of accident prevention by personal example and by education of pediatric patients and their parents.

COMMITTEE ON ACCIDENT AND POISON PREVENTION (1979-1980)

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This statement has been approved by the Council on Child and Adolescent Health.

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5. November highway deaths lowest since 1963. In: *American Academy of Pediatrics Accident Prevention Committee Newsletter*. Evanston, IL, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1975, vol 2, no. 2, p 3
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