

## **Stop Signs: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q: Why don't they put in more stop signs?**

**A:** A stop sign is one of our most valuable and effective control devices when used at the right place and under the right conditions. It is intended to help drivers and pedestrians at an intersection decide who has the right-of-way.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is a set of well-developed, federal and state recognized guidelines that help to indicate when such controls become necessary. These guidelines take into consideration, among other things, the probability of vehicles arriving at an intersection at the same time, the length of time traffic must wait to enter, traffic delays, and the availability of safe crossing opportunities.

Public understanding of the function of stop signs is one of the most critical elements in reducing speeding and traffic accidents.

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### **Q: What is the purpose of a stop sign?**

**A:** The stop sign is used to assign right of way at an intersection and to make sure that traffic flows smoothly and predictably.

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### **Q: Will a stop sign reduce speeding in my neighborhood?**

**A:** Because a stop sign is used to assign right of way at an intersection, it is not an effective means to control speeding. Research shows that where stop signs are installed as "deterrents" or "speed breakers," there are high incidences of intentional violations resulting in accidents. When vehicles must stop, the speed reduction is only near the stop sign, and drivers tend to speed up between stop sign controlled intersections. When not required to stop by cross street traffic, only 5 to 20% of all drivers come to a complete stop, 40 to 60% will come to a rolling stop below 5 mph, and 20 to 40% will pass through at higher speeds. Signs placed on major and collector streets for the purpose of speed reduction are the most flagrantly violated.

**Stop signs are not warranted in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) as an effective measure to reduce speeding.**

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### **Q: Will increasing the use of stop signs in my neighborhood, better control traffic?**

**A:** As with any traffic control device, overuse of stop signs will cause many drivers to ignore them, creating a more hazardous situation, especially in low volume areas, such as residential neighborhoods. Because a stop sign causes a substantial inconvenience to motorists, it should be used only where needed. Studies have shown that, sometimes, after installing a stop sign there is an increase in rear end collisions. Also, the stop sign may cause such an inconvenience that traffic detours through residential streets, parking lots, etc. A little known fact is that the "stop and go traffic" resulting from the placement of stop signs will increase carbon dioxide emissions, thereby further impacting the air quality in your area. There is a noticeable noise increase in the vicinity of an intersection from acceleration and braking. Additionally, deceleration, idling, and acceleration of vehicles increases fuel consumption.