SAFE SYSTEM CASE STUDY

Intelligent speed assistance in Washington

KEY TAKEAWAY: Washington state's intelligent speed assistance law is an example of acting on known risk patterns to prevent future injuries. Washington will use the technology to limit vehicle speeds for certain convicted drivers for whom repeated enforcement actions have not reliably changed behavior.

SAFETY LEVER



Washington adopted Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) as a tool for courts to help break the cycle of unsafe speeding, fines, arrests, license suspensions and recidivism among high-risk drivers. Through its ISA law, the state demonstrates how policy can be used to limit vehicle speeds for drivers convicted of criminal traffic offenses or repeat infractions involving excessive speeding. This more targeted and preventative tool can be applied when enforcement alone has not been sufficient to change behavior.



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Instead of relying on the same enforcement tools …

Handing out more tickets and fines

Traditional speeding enforcement and sanctions have not been successful in changing behavior for some high-risk drivers. These drivers continue to speed excessively even after receiving a ticket, fine or other penalty.

… Washington is using a new tool to address persistent speeding

Mandatory ISA after high-risk speeding offenses

Washington's law, which passed in 2025, will require drivers convicted of a criminal offense involving excessive speeding or with multiple violations within a certain period that include at least one excessive speeding offense to install an ISA device that limits their vehicle's speed to the posted speed limit. Judges may also impose ISA as a condition of probation or pretrial release.

Instead of repeating the cycle …

Persistent speeding despite enforcement

Some high-risk drivers continue to speed excessively despite repeated tickets and fines. Even license suspensions have not always been enough to prevent future violations.

… Washington is focusing on preventing future speeding

Making excessive speeding much less likely

ISA can help break the cycle of repeated speeding offenses by preventing high-risk drivers from routinely exceeding speed limits. Rather than relying solely on penalties after violations occur, the technology ensures these drivers generally drive the speed limit.

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Instead of burdening low-income drivers …

Inequitable and ineffective punishment

Escalating fines and fees disproportionately burden low-income drivers and can lead to debt-based license suspensions without producing meaningful, lasting safety improvements. At the same time, higher-income drivers may simply absorb fines without changing behavior, limiting the effectiveness of this approach in reducing excessive speeds.

… Washington helps prevent high-risk drivers from continuing to speed, regardless of income

Limiting speeds without financial hardship

The use of ISA reduces reliance on officers making traffic stops and diminishes the disproportionate impacts that escalating fines and fees cause for low-income road users. Washington's ISA law requires drivers to pay for the device but allows costs to be waived for people with financial hardships.

What lever did this intervention pull?

PRIMARY: By directly limiting vehicle speeds for the riskiest drivers, the law enabling ISA reduces severity by cutting down on extreme speeding.

State and local DOTs can reduce crash injuries by lowering one or more of the following **SAFETY LEVERS**:

EXPOSURE	how much people drive
SEVERITY	how fast vehicles travel and how heavy they are
LIKELIHOOD OF A CRASH	how often road users come into conflict

What else can be done?

Interim step: States and local jurisdictions can build up to this approach by piloting active or passive ISA within their government fleet vehicles to lead by example and reinforce a culture of safety. This is a low-cost, low-hassle strategy, as ISA can be added as an aftermarket retrofit or during regular fleet turnover every few years.

Policy/process trigger: Local governments can advocate for and support state policies enabling ISA to curb excessive speeding behaviors. This tool fits into the "Safe Vehicles" component of a Safe System approach.