

Speeds are increasing; so are fines

Highway Patrol to have stricter enforcement as ND interstate speed limit goes to 80

BY MATT HENSON
WDAY News

FARGO — North Dakota drivers are now able to put the pedal a little farther to the metal.

Starting today, Aug. 1, the speed limit on the interstate in most areas of North Dakota will increase from 75 to 80 mph.

However, in some places, drivers will have to hit the brakes and slow down.

The state won't start changing the 75 mph signs to 80 mph signs until Monday, Aug. 4, a process that will take a few weeks. In the meantime, drivers will be permitted to go 80 mph.

"Even though the speed limit is going up that does not mean we are giving any extra tolerance above what goes above that speed limit," said Sgt. Adam Malafa with the North Dakota Highway Patrol.

In fact, troopers were informed that the usual 5 mph over leeway is now down to 2 mph.

"Tightening up our enforcement is something that we are probably going to do to make sure we don't allow things like 85 and 86 to become the new normal," Malafa said.

The speed increase applies to rural stretches of interstate across North Dakota. However, some sections will actually see a decrease. The speed limit will drop to 70 through Grand Forks, Valley City, Jamestown,

Dickinson and the curves through the Badlands.

"DOT has determined that's an area where we don't want vehicles going that 80 mph, again just because you have more vehicles entering and exiting and as you are entering and exiting from exit ramps there's more points of conflict and we just don't want that to happen with that higher difference in speed at 80," Malafa said.

Fines are also increasing. There is a \$20 minimum fine, and it's \$5 for every mile per hour over the speed limit. Anything more than 15 miles per hour over the limit will also include an additional \$20 fee.

"Going to see what the reaction from the public is, is 80 miles an hour, do people just go 80 and that's what people wanted, is it truly going to be where we are at and that's where we want to be, or are people going to push the limits to see what they can get away with," Malafa said.

For drivers heading south on I-29 into Fargo, there will be a more gradual decrease between Harwood and north Fargo. The speed will drop from 80 to 65 to 55. Slower speed areas will also be extended around West Fargo and Bismarck.

The last time the state increased the speed limit was in 2003, when it went from 70 to 75 mph.

You can reach Matt Henson at mhenson@wday.com.



Photos by Chris Flynn / The Forum

West Fargo Public Schools Superintendent Beth Slette is getting settled into her new office on Thursday at the new West Fargo Schools administration building.

Settling in

WF schools administration move into new digs

BY WENDY REUER
The Forum

WEST FARGO

Moving is a process, not an event.

That's the mantra West Fargo Public Schools Spokeswoman Heather Leas has been repeating as district staff wrap up moving from the Leidal Education Center to the district administration's new building at 2028 Second Ave. NW.

The School Board approved purchasing the former Wanzek Construction headquarters for \$3.6 million, including furniture and fixtures, in November. The district had been considering a new administration building for years, as space was running out to house the growing administration staff at the Leidal Education Center.

This week, a majority of staff have moved into the three-story, 30,000 square-foot building, including Superintendent Beth Slette and Leas, who oversees district communications and safety programs.

Leas said the open lobby will soon house the same type of security found in schools. Doors will be locked on the west side of the first floor, which houses the superintendent's office, along with the future School Board meeting room. The

east side of the building's first floor will house business office personnel and human resources.

"We are very excited to offer the same level of security to our staff that we have at our schools," Leas said.

Also on the east side of the building is the district registrar's office, which will be located near restrooms with plenty of space for when families stop in to register students, they can easily make it a family affair.

Along with offices and cubicle space on two floors of the building, various conference rooms are available to hold meetings of all sizes. On the second floor, a large training and gathering room was fitted up for meeting and event purposes.

While most staff had offices in the Leidal Education Center, other employees, such as special education and behavioral health and wellness employees, were housed inside schools or traveled to different schools throughout the week. They will now have a base office to use when needed.

"This is the first time since the (behavioral health and wellness program) was created that staff has all been able to be together," Leas said.

The district will continue to use the Leidal Education Center. The



The new West Fargo Schools administration building, as seen on Thursday is known as the "District Support Center."

technology department will remain there for now, and the adult education programs will be moved from the Lodoen Center to the Leidal Education Center for the upcoming school year. After the 2025-26 school year, a task force will likely be created to map out a plan for future use of the Leidal Education Center.

"It will be re-purposed for some sort of student programming," Leas said.

The Leidal Education Center was built in 2000 on the site of North Elementary School, which was razed to make room for the parking lot. The building was initially home to the administration and the Community High School. In 2011, the Leidal Center was expanded and Community High moved to the Lodoen Community Center, which is also home to the West Fargo Public Library and West Fargo Early Education Center. The Lodoen building was the first West Fargo High School building.

After an expansion of administrative space was taken out of 2024 referendum discussions, the district considered

expanding the building. Early estimates were returned with a price tag of about \$1.6 million to provide just four offices and space for six cubicles.

The new building's price tag came in less than other area builds. Fargo Public Schools spent \$7.3 million in 2020 to purchase the former 45,000 square-foot RDO building and convert it into an administrative building.

In 2016, the city of Fargo spent \$23.7 million on its new, 150,000 square-foot City Hall. Last year, the city of West Fargo signed a five-year lease to transfer City Hall to the 30,000 square-foot former Wex building at 2515 Sixth St. E., which will cost the city about \$3.6 million over five years, not including an additional \$500,000 to set up spaces and offices for staff as well as a new City Commission chambers.

The West Fargo School Board will hold its first meeting in the new support center at 6 p.m., Monday, Aug. 4.

Readers can reach Forum reporter Wendy Reuer at wreuer@forumcomm.com or 701-241-5530.



Matt Henson / WDAY

A trooper runs radar on Interstate 29 south of Fargo. Starting Friday, Aug. 1, the speed limit on interstate highways in most areas of North Dakota will increase from 75 to 80 miles per hour.

Man rescued from grain bin in western Minnesota

CAMPBELL, Minn. — A man was rescued after being stuck in a grain bin for nearly two hours in Wilkin County.

According to a release from the Wilkin County Sheriff's Office, first responders were sent to the scene at roughly 12:13 p.m. Monday, July 28, to rescue the man, who was found submerged in corn up to his waist.

When Wilkin County

deputies arrived, the man was alert and conscious in the center of the grain bin, complaining of leg pain. He had been stuck for roughly 30 minutes before calling for help, the release said. Emergency crews, including the Campbell and Tintah fire departments, used specialized grain bin rescue equipment to rescue him. He was freed from the corn by 1:26 p.m., the release said.

The man initially entered the grain bin to

dislodge stuck corn when the grain began to move more quickly than he could react, the Sheriff's Office said. The man's son shoveled corn away from him until responders arrived.

The man was taken to Essentia Health in Fargo for further evaluation, the release said.

The incident was the third grain bin accident reported in Minnesota this summer, the release said.

Campbell is roughly 20

miles southwest ofergus Falls.

Moorhead hosting law enforcement burger cook-off, free lunch

MOORHEAD — Area law enforcement leaders will square off in a battle of burgers next week.

On Tuesday, Aug. 5, the Moorhead Police Department will host the 20th Annual Chiefs and Sheriffs Burger Cook-Off at the Law Enforcement Center in Moorhead. According to a press release from the city of

Moorhead, contestants are tasked with making one burger to be judged on appearance and taste.

The event will start at 11 a.m., with judging at 11:45 a.m. The winner will be announced by noon, followed by a free lunch, the press release said.

The Cass and Clay County sheriff's offices and Barnesville, Glyndon, Hawley, Fargo, West Fargo and Moorhead police departments are participating in the competition. The winner of last year's

competition was Glyndon Police Chief Justin Vogel.

Judges include representatives from WDAY, The Flag and Froggy 99.9 Radio, the press release said.

The event is in conjunction with Night to Unite, a nationwide celebration held on the first Tuesday of August to promote community safety.

The Law Enforcement Center is at 911 11th St. N. in Moorhead.

Forum staff reports

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