MEXICAN ROAD SAFETY STANDARDS

In Defense of NOM-037-2026

Mexico’s roadside barrier standard



Roadside barrier on the outside of a curve. AI-generated illustration.

On May 19, 2026, Mexico published NOM-037-SICT2-2026, Barreras de protección en carreteras y vías urbanas (protective barriers on highways and urban roads), in the Diario Oficial de la Federación. A NOM is an Official Mexican Standard, a mandatory technical regulation issued by the federal government. Under clause 18, this standard took effect on November 15, 2026.

What documents should a project team ask for?

For roadside and median barriers, the standard calls for a certificate of compliance from an accredited certification body or an approval letter from the Technical Services Directorate (DGST) of Mexico’s Ministry of Infrastructure, Communications and Transportation (SICT). The document identifies the approved system and its performance in full-scale tests at the relevant MASH level.

Read the official standard · Check the effective date

What the standard requires to select a device

Clause 5.3.4 governs selection of roadside and median barriers. Bridge railings (clause 6.3) and transition sections (clause 7.3) have their own selection requirements.

• The device needs a certificate of compliance or DGST approval letter identifying the system and detailing its specifications.

• The document must state that the containment level meets the full-scale tests of the corresponding test level in AASHTO's Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH, 2016).

• The DGST lists approved barriers. A system on the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) list that meets MASH also requires prior DGST approval for installation.

• Install the approved materials and configuration using the tested procedure and personnel trained on the specific system.

Chapter 8 covers barrier end sections. Where a design permits an impact attenuator, consult NOM-008-SCT2-2020 or its successor.

Why MASH, and why the vehicle fleet matters

A test vehicle is, in essence, a hypothesis about the traffic a barrier will receive. When the vehicle fleet changes, that hypothesis has to change with it, which is why standards get updated. NOM-037-SICT2-2026 replaces NOM-037-SCT2-2020, which had replaced NOM-037-SCT2-2012.

The standard draws on MASH and the November 15, 2021 clarification memorandum. In Table 2, every level uses a 1,100 ± 25 kg passenger car and a 2,270 ± 50 kg pickup. The following table shows the nominal speed and angle of the impacts and the additional heavy vehicle where applicable.

Level	Car and pickup	Additional heavy vehicle
NC-1	50 km/h, 25°	None
NC-2	70 km/h, 25°	None
NC-3	100 km/h, 25°	None
NC-4	100 km/h, 25°	C2 single-unit box truck, 10,000 ± 300 kg, 90 km/h at 15°
NC-5	100 km/h, 25°	T3S2 tractor-trailer with van body, 36,000 ± 500 kg, 80 km/h at 15°
NC-6	100 km/h, 25°	T3S2 tractor-trailer with tanker, 36,000 ± 500 kg, 80 km/h at 15°

Table 6 sets the minimum level for a road section using speed and the annual average daily traffic of buses and freight trucks. Use it with the official June 30 correction.

The work behind the text

The draft went to public consultation on December 19, 2025, for 60 calendar days. The comments received were analyzed and resolved in Mexico's National Consultative Committee for Land Transport Standardization, which approved the text on March 26, 2026. The standard was issued on April 7 and published on May 19, 2026.

Among those who took part were the DGST, the Mexican Transportation Institute (IMT), other SICT directorates, UNAM's Institute of Engineering and Faculty of Engineering, IPN's ESIA Zacatenco, trucking and bus associations, and technical societies. The objective the standard itself declares is to minimize the severity of traffic crashes. Behind every table is the work of engineers at the DGST and the other institutions, and that effort pays off when the standard is applied as written.

Where it shows up on site

The standard is mandatory on federal, state and municipal highways, and on urban roads with an operating or design speed above 50 km/h, including toll concessions.

New installations of simple "fishtail" end sections (formerly OD-4.4.2/S) have been prohibited since November 15, 2026. Clause 8 recommends gradual replacement of the ones already installed.

How to specify it correctly

1. Ask for documentation of the complete system and of the transitions and terminals specified for the project.

2. Compare the documented containment level with the minimum for the project's speed and heavy traffic.

3. Check height, posts, anchorage and materials against the approved specifications before accepting delivery.

4. For a system from the FHWA list, confirm prior DGST approval.

5. Install as tested, using personnel trained on that specific configuration.

Standards and documents cited

NOM-037-SICT2-2026 and its official correction. Earlier editions: NOM-037-SCT2-2020 and NOM-037-SCT2-2012. NOM-008-SCT2-2020 covers impact attenuators. AASHTO, Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (2016), with the implementation clarification of November 15, 2021.

Contact the APM Seguridad Vial technical team for help reviewing the approval documentation for a project or tender.