



American Association of
Motor Vehicle Administrators

recommendations
safety **TITLING**
Registration
policy **Vehicle**
STANDARDS



Regulation of Off-Road Vehicles Best Practices



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VEHICLE STANDING COMMITTEE
OFF-ROAD VEHICLES SUBGROUP

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Jurisdictions are often faced with requests to register or title vehicles that are not manufactured for use on public roadways. These off-road vehicles may lack many safety features such as doors, windshields, seatbelts, lights, braking systems, steering mechanisms, and so on that are required on motor vehicles complying with federal safety standards.

An off-road vehicle is defined as a vehicle that is not designed and manufactured to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards or Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. They may also be referred to as off-highway vehicles.

For purposes of this document, off-road vehicles include but are not limited to the following:

- Surplus military vehicles
- Historical military vehicles
- Mini trucks (including those over 25 years old)
- All-terrain vehicles (ATVs)
- Dune buggies
- Snowmobiles on skis or converted to operate on tires

- Dirt bikes
- Farm tractors
- Golf carts

AAMVA members have adopted a policy statement on off-road vehicles:

Off-Road Vehicles Policy

AAMVA recommends that, regardless of any retrofitting or modifications that have or might be made to a vehicle that was not originally designed, constructed, or intended for road use, Motor Vehicle Administrators should use available statutory authority, or encourage adoption of such authority, to prohibit the use, and registration for on-road use, of vehicles not designed, constructed, or intended for on-road use.

The recommendations in Section 2 below, which are consistent with the above AAMVA policy, are provided to assist jurisdictions in responding to requests to register or title off-road vehicles.

Chapter 2 Best Practices for Vehicles Designed and Manufactured as Off-Road Vehicles

AAMVA recommends the following best practices for addressing the use of off-road vehicles:

- 2.1 Off-road vehicles should be prohibited on public roadways, regardless of age, unless the vehicle bears certification labels attesting to compliance in the U.S. with the applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or in Canada, compliance with Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) and with applicable or Canadian Environmental Protection Agency (CEPA) emission requirements for on-road use.
- 2.2 Do not issue a title or registration for off-road vehicles that were last titled or registered in another jurisdiction, unless the vehicle bears certification labels attesting to compliance in the U.S. with the applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or in Canada, compliance with Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) and with applicable or Canadian Environmental Protection Agency (CEPA) emission requirements for on-road use.
- 2.3 Restrict off-road vehicles usage only to crossing public roadways in a safe manner that is consistent with the jurisdiction's restrictions on crossing public roadways.
- 2.4 If a jurisdiction is currently registering or titling off-road vehicles, propose statutory language to prohibit registration and recall all current titles and registrations. If this is not practical or possible, consider allowing the current title and registration to remain valid until the vehicle is transferred or junked but do not title or register it to a new owner.
- 2.5. If a jurisdiction is required to issue a certificate of title to prove ownership but does not authorize operation of the vehicle on public roadways, include the indicator "Off-Road Vehicle–Not for Use on Public Roadways" on the title.

Special note: Some of these best practices might conflict with or lack support by a jurisdiction's laws. In such cases, jurisdictions are encouraged to pursue statutory changes necessary to implement the best practices. However, if statutory changes prohibiting the use of off-road vehicles on public roadways are not possible, the recommendations in Sections 3 and 4 are provided as alternatives to assist those jurisdictions.

Chapter 3 Guidance for Jurisdictions That Allow a Limited Use of Off-Road Vehicles for Farming, Industrial, Landscaping, or Public Works Use on Public Roadways

The following recommendations apply to off-road vehicles but do not apply to off-road vehicles that operate on tracks, lags, or skis or to minibikes manufactured as toys to replicate motorcycles, also known as pocket bikes.

- 3.1 Limit the use to farming, industrial, landscaping, or public works use, in accordance with the jurisdiction's slow-moving vehicle regulations.
- 3.2 Limit the use to roadways with a posted speed limit of no more than 35 mph (55 kph) but should not be operated more than 25 mph (40 kph).
- 3.3 Limit the operation to no more than 100 yards (91.4 m) on a public roadway or require the vehicle owner to own property on at least one side of the roadway, when traveling beyond the 100 yards (91.4 m).
- 3.4 Do not allow use on controlled access highways.
- 3.5 If a license plate is issued, issue a distinctive license plate to assist law enforcement in identifying compliance with operational limitations.
- 3.6 Require reflective emblem or placard as described in the ANSI/SAE standard S276.8 APR2016 (R2020) to indicate a slow-moving vehicle.
- 3.7 Require a driver's license before operating off-road vehicles on public roadways.

Chapter 4 Guidance for Jurisdictions That Allow On-Road Use of Vehicles Manufactured as Off-Road Vehicles

The following recommendations apply to most off-road vehicles but do not apply to off-road vehicles that operate on tracks, lags, or ski, or to minibikes manufactured as toys to replicate motorcycles, also known as pocket bikes.

Some of the following recommendations include visual inspections. Inspection facility representatives should be consulted when these recommendations are considered.

- 4.1 Include the indicator “Off-Road Vehicle” or a similar notation on the title and/or registration for vehicles that do not comply with applicable FMVSS and CMVSS.
- 4.2 Prohibit operation on controlled access highways.
- 4.3 Restrict operation to roads with a maximum posted speed limit of no more than 35 mph (55 kph).
- 4.4 Require compliance with all local traffic ordinances.
- 4.5 Require dealers of off-road vehicles to be licensed as motor vehicle dealers, consistent with applicable jurisdictional law.
- 4.6 Establish procedures to ensure the proper ownership and importation of the off-road vehicle.
- 4.7 Use the original manufacturer’s serial number on the registration and title as another indicator that the vehicle is an off-road vehicle. An assigned VIN may be issued if it is clear a jurisdiction has assigned the VIN to an off-road vehicle.
- 4.8 Do not indicate homemade, assembled, or a reconstructed on the registration and title for off-road vehicles to reduce the opportunity of an off-road vehicle indicator from being removed from the title and registration.
- 4.9 Physically inspect the vehicle prior to initial titling or registration, or if physical inspection is not possible, obtain photographic evidence of the vehicle, including the serial number and its placement. This information should be stored with the vehicle record for future reference.
- 4.10 Require written affirmation that the vehicle components that did not meet or are not certified as meeting FMVSS OR CMVSS standards (e.g., lights, tires, mirrors, glazing materials, seat belts) have been replaced with FMVSS OR CMVSS conforming equipment.
- 4.11 Require a driver’s license before operating off-road vehicles on public roadways.

Chapter 5 Special Considerations for Low-Speed Vehicles (LSVS)

Federal law 49 CFR 571.3(a) defines the term “low-speed vehicle” as follows:

Low speed vehicle means a motor vehicle,

- 1) That is 4-wheeled
 - 2) Whose speed attainable in 1.6 km (1 mile) is more than 32 kilometers per hour (20 miles per hour) and not more than 40 kilometers per hour (25 miles per hour) on a paved level surface, and
 - 3) Whose GVWR is less than 1,361 kilograms (3,000 pounds).
- 5.1 Consider adding requirements in jurisdictional statute that LSVs must have

been originally manufactured and maintained as a LSV and that it does not have handlebars.

- 5.2 Require LSVs to meet FMVSS established in 49 CFR § 571.500 for low-speed vehicles.
- 5.3 Limit the use of a LSVs to roadways with a posted speed limit of no more than 35 mph/55 kph.
- 5.4 Limit operation to not less than 20 mph and not more than 25 mph/40 kph.
- 5.5 Do not allow the operation of a LSV on controlled access highways.
- 5.6 Require a driver’s license before operating a LSV on a public roadway.

Chapter 6 Special Considerations for Golf Carts

Golf carts are designed by the manufacturer primarily for use on golf courses. A few golf carts may be considered LSVs if they meet the definition described above. However, most golf carts cannot attain 20 mph (32 kph) and therefore do not meet this definition.

Some jurisdictions authorize golf carts to be operated on certain roadways with specific permits or registrations issued by either the jurisdiction or by the local government entity. The following are recommendations for the limited operation of golf carts on public roadways:

- 6.1 Allow the operation of golf carts on public roadways **only** in accordance with all local ordinances.

- 6.2 Limit the use to roadways with a posted speed limit of no more than 35 mph (55 kph).
- 6.3 Do not allow the operation of a golf cart on controlled access highways.
- 6.4 Require the golf cart to have equipment such as headlamps, tail lamps, reflectors,; stop lamps, a mirror, and brakes.
- 6.5 Require the reflective emblem or placard as described by the ANSI/SAE standard S276.8 APR2016 (R2020) to indicate a slow-moving vehicle.
- 6.6 Require a driver's license before operating a golf-cart on a public roadway.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

The foundation of this paper and its recommendations are based on a combination of research, expertise, knowledge, and input accumulated by members of the Vehicle Standing Committee. In some cases, adopting recommendations from this document may require law, rule, or policy change. Therefore, jurisdictions are encouraged to collaborate with any stakeholders who have interest in the operation of off-road vehicles when making any regulatory changes. If any regulations are changed, guidance on driver licensing and equipment requirements and operational limitations should be provided to law enforcement agencies, vehicle inspection facilities, and other stakeholders.

Appendix A Acronyms

AAMVA	American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
ASAE	American Society of Agricultural Engineers
CEPA	Canadian Environmental Protection Agency
CMVSS	Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FMVSS	Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards
VIN	Vehicle Identification Number

Appendix B Definitions

The following is an explanation of terminology used in this document. AAMVA is not necessarily recommending jurisdictions adopt these terms for use in their statutes or administrative rules, but they are provided to help readers understand the use of the terms in this document.

Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standards	Prescribed in the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Act (S.C. 1993, c. 16), which was enacted to regulate the manufacture and importation of motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment to reduce the risk of death, injury, and damage to property and the environment. The Act applies to prescribed classes of vehicles, tires, and equipment for use in the restraint of children and disabled persons.
Controlled access highway	A type of <i>highway</i> that has been designed for high-speed vehicular traffic, with all traffic entering and exiting the <i>highway</i> via ramps.
Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards	U.S. federal regulations found in 49 CFR 571 that specify design, construction, and performance requirements for motor vehicles or items of motor vehicle equipment to protect occupants against unreasonable risk of injury or death and prevent and reduce vehicle crashes.
Jurisdiction	Any state, district, territory, or province of the United States or Canada.
Low-speed vehicle	A vehicle that is four-wheeled, whose speed attainable in 1.6 km (1 mile) is more than 20 mph (32 kph) and not more than 25 mph (40 kph) on a paved level surface and whose GVWR is less than 1,134 kilograms (2,500 pounds).
Motor vehicle	A vehicle driven or drawn by mechanical power and manufactured primarily for use on public streets, roads, and highways but does not include a vehicle operated only on a rail line.
Off-road vehicle	A vehicle that is not designed and manufactured to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards or Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. May also be referred to as an off-highway vehicle.

Public roadway	Any road that is part of the highway system or any road, street, or right-of-way dedicated or maintained for public use.
Registration	Documentary proof of authority to operate a motor vehicle on a public roadway or the process of issuing such proof.
Title	Documentary proof of motor vehicle ownership.

Appendix C Off-Road Vehicles Subgroup

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