



Advisory

To: Golf Cart Manufacturers, Dealers,
and Customers

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GOLF CART LIMITATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

Vehicles that meet the definition of a golf cart are not the same as on-road vehicles, motorcycles, low-speed vehicles, or neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs), and have use limitations and restrictions. California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 345 defines a golf cart as having at least three wheels in contact with the ground, an unladen weight of less than 1,300 pounds, a maximum speed of 15 miles per hour, the ability to carry golf equipment, and cannot carry more than two occupants including the driver. All golf carts that are offered for sale, sold, or used in California must have a CARB-certified engine such as a Small Off-Road Engine (SORE), Large Spark Ignition Engine (LSI), or Electric Engine. SORE and LSI engines are certified to an off-road emissions standard, and not to a more stringent emissions standard like on-road vehicles. CARB-certified SORE and LSI engines have an emissions label stating that they are certified to an off-road use only standard. Because all non-electric powered golf carts do not meet the CARB emissions requirements for on-road use, they are not eligible for on-road license and registration.

Vehicles that are certified by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) for on-road use also have to meet other requirements such as Department of Transportation Safety Requirements and the relaxed Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) for NEVs. If a golf cart is modified to exceed 15 miles per hour or seat more than 2 people, it is no longer a golf cart. A golf cart cannot be modified for registration purposes to appear as a NEV.

However, operation of a golf cart as defined in Section 345 of the CVC is permitted on-road pursuant to the CVC Section 21115. CVC Section 21115 states a golf cart can operate on-road if a resolution or ordinance is adopted by local authority, and includes rules and regulations for crossing zones, speed limits, and other operating standards. Furthermore, CVC 4019 exempts golf carts from requirements pertaining to registration, licensing, or equipment except when a golf cart is operated during darkness in which case it will be subject to proper equipment provisions. In addition, pursuant to Section 21716 of CVC, a golf cart is prohibited from driving on any roadway in a posted speed zone of 25 miles per hour or more.

For questions about this matter, please contact the Public Information Hotline at 800.242.4450.