

INFORMATION BULLETIN



February 25, 2022

REGISTRATION OF GOLF CARTS

The CHP, Commercial Vehicle Section (CVS), has received numerous inquiries related to the registration of golf carts with the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Section 345 of the California Vehicle Code (CVC) states: "A 'golf cart' is a motor vehicle having not less than three wheels in contact with the ground, having an unladen weight less than 1,300 pounds, which is designed to be and is operated at **not more than 15 miles per hour** and designed to carry golf equipment and not more than two persons including the driver."

Section 4019 CVC states, "A golf cart operated pursuant to Section 21115 is exempt from registration." This registration exemption is only applicable in limited situations where a local authority has a resolution or ordinance allowing golf carts to be operated on a highway located adjacent to or providing access to a golf course, pursuant to Section 21115 CVC and Section 1961 of the Streets and Highways Code.

Golf carts are not designed, manufactured, or equipped to meet U.S. Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS), or certified with a U.S. FMVSS label, as required to be operated on highways. A golf cart can only be modified to meet U.S. FMVSS by the original equipment manufacturer or a federally listed, final-stage manufacturer. There are some golf carts which may have been registered in error and observed operating outside of the Section 21115 CVC exemption. On-highway operation of a golf cart, outside of the exemption contained in Section 21115 CVC, is unlawful and a violation of Section 24002(b) CVC.

NOTE: Section 529.3, Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, defines a final-stage manufacturer as "a person who performs such manufacturing operations on an incomplete automobile that it becomes a completed automobile."

Golf cart owners may be directed by the DMV to the CHP for a vehicle identification number (VIN) verification and an explanation as to why golf carts cannot be registered. The absence of a 17-digit VIN and/or U.S. FMVSS label are indicators to the CHP VIN officer that the golf cart was not designed to safely operate on highways. The DMV may refuse to register a noncompliant golf cart, if the vehicle is determined to be mechanically unfit or unsafe to be operated or moved on highways pursuant to Section 4751(d) CVC, even when it displays a CHP-applied replacement VIN plate (blue tag).



A golf cart should not be confused with a low-speed vehicle (LSV) or neighborhood electric vehicle (NEV), as defined in Section 385.5 CVC. An LSV or NEV is not a golf cart, except when operated pursuant to Section 21115 or 21115.1 CVC. Both LSVs and NEVs are manufactured to specifically meet the equipment and safety requirements of a motor vehicle, and have 17-digit VINs and U.S. FMVSS labels. Additionally, they are required to be registered pursuant to Section 4000(a) CVC. To classify a motor vehicle as an LSV or an NEV, it shall have four wheels, a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 3,000 pounds, and shall be operated at **not more than 25 miles per hour**.

Questions regarding this Information Bulletin may be directed to CVS at (916) 843-3400.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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