

Synopsis of Non-Traditional Motor Vehicles, Other Vehicles and DC Law


Legal requirements to Register and Operate a Non-Traditional Motor Vehicle and Other Vehicles

In the D.C. Code, motor vehicles are defined as vehicles propelled by an internal-combustion engine, electricity, or steam. [1]. All traffic laws apply to motor vehicles, motorized bicycles, except as discussed below or as more fully set forth in the applicable statute or regulation.

Safety Requirements

All motor vehicles in the District of Columbia must have a certification label that identifies the manufacturer, the date of manufacture, and the statement: "This vehicle conforms to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards (FMVSS) in effect on the date of manufacture shown above." [2]

Motorcycles, Motor Driven Cycles and Motorized Bicycles

Vehicle Type	Definition	Inspection Required	License Required	Insurance Required	Registration By DMV Required	Helmet Required	Permitted on Sidewalk	Permitted on Bike Lanes	Parking
Motorcycle	Motorcycle is any motor vehicle that has a seat or saddle for the use of the operator and has two (2) or three (3) wheels in contact with the ground. The term "motorcycle" does not include a tractor, a motor driven cycle or motorized bicycle unless operated at speeds in excess of thirty miles per hour (30 mph), or a three (3)-wheeled motor vehicle with a cab and windshield. [3],	No [4]	Yes, operator must pass a motorcycle demonstration test in DC or motorcycle demonstration course in VA or MD, and have an "M" endorsement on operator's license. [5]	Yes, must meet the Compulsory No-Fault Motor Vehicle Insurance Act limits. [6]	Yes; \$52. [7] Non-DC vehicles must meet their state's registration requirements.	Yes. [8]	No [10]	No	Motor vehicle rules apply, except that some areas are reserved for motorcycles only
									
Motor-Driven Cycle	Motor-driven cycle is a motor vehicle that has: (a) A seat or saddle for the use of the operator and has: (b) Two (2) or three (3) wheels in contact with the ground; (c) A gas, electric, or hybrid motor with a maximum piston or rotor displacement of fifty cubic centimeters (50 cc), or its	No [4]	Yes. [9]	Yes.[6].	Yes. \$30. [7] Non-DC vehicles must meet their state's registration requirements.	Yes. [8]	No, except may park on sidewalk outside of Central Business District, so long as not attached to any tree,	No	May park on sidewalk outside of Central Business District, so long as not attached to a tree, tree box or

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	<p>equivalent, which will propel the device unassisted at a maximum speed no greater than thirty miles per hour (30 mph). A motor-driven cycle shall be a motorcycle when operated at speeds in excess of thirty miles per hour (30 mph) and the operator shall be required to have on his or her possession a valid motorcycle endorsement and “(d) A direct or automatic power drive system which requires no clutch or gear shift operation by the operator after the drive system is engaged with the power unit.”. [3]</p>						tree box, or planting area, does not block path of pedestrians and maintains an ADA compliant clearance from other obstructions. [10]		planting area, does not block path of pedestrians and maintains an ADA compliant clearance from any other obstruction
Motorized Bicycle	<p>A motorized bicycle is a two or three wheeled vehicle with all of the following characteristics: (a) A post mounted seat or saddle for each person that the device is designed and equipped to carry; “(b) A vehicle with two (2) or three (3) wheels in contact with the ground, which are at least sixteen inches (16 in.) in diameter; “(c) Fully operative pedals for human propulsion; and “(d) A motor incapable of propelling the device at a speed of more than twenty miles per hour (20 mph) on level ground. A motorized bicycle shall be a motorcycle when operated by motor at speeds in</p>	No [4]	No, unless driven in excess of twenty miles per hour (20 mph). See definition. [3]. Operator must be at least 16 years of age. [11]	No [6]	No [7]	No	No, except to park.[12]	No. [13]	May be parked in a bike rack or on a curb so as not to impede pedestrian traffic. [14]

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	<p>excess of thirty miles per hour (30 mph) and the operator shall be required to have on his or her possession a valid motorcycle endorsement. A motorized bicycle shall be a motor-driven cycle when operated by motor at speeds in excess of twenty miles per hour (20 mph) and the operator shall be required to have on his or her possession a valid driver license. [3]</p>								

Additional Vehicles

<i>Vehicle Type</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Inspection Required</i>	<i>License Required</i>	<i>Insurance Required</i>	<i>Registration By DMV Required</i>	<i>Helmet Required</i>	<i>Permitted on Sidewalk</i>	<i>Permitted on Bike Lanes</i>	<i>Parking</i>
All-Terrain Vehicles and Dirt Bikes	<p>An all-terrain vehicle ("ATV") is defined as any motor vehicle with not less than three low pressure tires, but not more than six low pressure tires, designed primarily for off-road use and which has a seat or saddle designed to be straddled by the operator. A dirt bike is defined as any motorcycle designed primarily for off-road use. [15]</p>	<p>N/A. It is a criminal offense to operate an ATV or a dirt bike on any public property in the District. ATVs and dirt bikes are not permitted to be registered in the District. [16]</p>							
									

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Low Speed Vehicles	Low speed vehicle means any four wheeled motor vehicle with a top speed that is greater than 20 miles per hour, but not greater than 25 miles per hour. [15]	Yes [4]	Yes [5]]	Yes [6]	Yes; \$72 [7] Non-DC vehicles must meet their state's registration requirements.	No	No	No	Motor vehicle rules apply.
Personal Mobility Devices (PMD)	Personal Mobility Device ("PMD") means a motorized propulsion device designed to transport one person or a self-balancing, two non-tandem wheeled device, designed to transport only one person with an electric propulsion system. [17]	No. By definition, PMDs are not considered motor vehicles. [1] Cannot be driven by anyone under the age of 16. [18]				No	Yes, except PMDs are generally not permitted on sidewalk space in the Central Business District. [19]	Yes	
									

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Notes

[1] D.C. Official Code § 50-1501.01; Specifically excluded from the definition of a motor vehicle for purposes of registration are , road rollers, farm tractors, vehicles propelled only upon rails or tracks, electric personal mobility devices (e.g. Segway), motorized bicycle and battery-operated wheelchairs when operated by a person with a disability.

[2] 18 DMCR § 700.9.

[3] 18 DMCR § 9901.

[4] D.C. Official Code §1101, et seq. and 18 DCMR § 601 et seq.

[5] D.C. Official Code §1401.01, 18 DCMR §§100.2 and 107.13

[6] See D.C. Official Code 31-2401 et seq.

[7] D.C. Official Code § 50-1501.01, et seq. and 18 DCMR §411.

[8] 18 DCMR § 2215.

[9] D.C. Official Code §1401.01 and 18 DCMR §§100.2.

[10] 18 DCMR § 2405.1(h).

[11] 18 DCMR §1200.10.

[12] 18 DCMR §§ 1201.18, 1209.6 and 1209.7.

[13] 18 DCMR §§ 1201.18.

[14] 18 DCMR §§ 1209.6 and 1209.7.

[15] D.C. Official Code § 50-2201.02(13) and (14).

[16] D.C. Official Code § 50-2201.04b.

[17] D.C. Official Code § 50-2201.02 (12).

[18] D.C. Official Code § 50-2201.04a(2).

[19] 18 DCMR § 1201.9

Pictures of motorcycles courtesy of American Honda Motor Company, Inc. and Yamaha Motor Corporation; ; picture of dirt bike courtesy of American Honda Motor Company, Inc.; picture of off-road vehicle courtesy of Yamaha Motor Corporation; picture of Gem Car courtesy of Global Electric Motorcars; Picture of Segway courtesy of Segway Inc.