

Class I & Class II Off-Highway Vehicles

Off-Highway Vehicles

Beginning January 1, 2017, certain off-highway vehicles may be registered as “Class I” or “Class II” off-highway vehicles. Operation of these vehicles is restricted to county roads, and these vehicles must meet certain safety requirements.

Class I off-highway vehicles (Plate Class Code 5610/2016) include mini-trucks and side-by-side vehicles.

Class II off-highway vehicles (Plate Class Code 5611/2016) are designed specifically for recreational purposes and include sand buggies, dune buggies, rock crawlers, and sand rails.

Class I and Class II off-highway vehicle registration is not available for “saddle-seated” vehicles, such as ATVs and dirt bikes.

Medium- and Low-Speed Vehicles

Beginning July 1, 2016, the definition of “medium-speed vehicle” was amended to allow slower-moving vehicles that are capable of exceeding 35 mph to be registered as medium-speed vehicles. (The prior law defined medium-speed vehicle to be a vehicle with a top speed of no more than 35 mph.)

Medium-speed vehicles are only permitted to be operated on streets with a posted speed limit below 40 mph, and they are not permitted to exceed 35 mph.

Examples of medium-speed vehicles include neighborhood electric vehicles capable of traveling faster than 30 mph, such as the ZENN, Ford THINK, and Kurrent.

The definition of “low-speed vehicle” remains unchanged, which includes vehicles with top speeds of 25 mph, such as certain low-speed neighborhood electric vehicles. Low-speed vehicles are not permitted to be operated on streets with a posted speed limit of more than 35 mph.

Medium- and low-speed vehicles are subject to federal safety standards.

Although ATVs do not qualify for Class I or Class II off-highway registration, ATVs may be registered as medium-speed vehicles. But as with any other medium-speed vehicles, ATVs are not permitted to be driven on roads where the speed limit exceeds 40 mph, and they must be driven at a speed of 35 mph or less.

In summary, non-saddled, off-highway vehicles can either be registered as Class I/II off-highway vehicles (limited to county roads) or as medium-speed vehicles (limited to 40 mph speed limit zones); low- and medium- speed vehicles that are not built for off-highway use may be registered as low- or medium-speed vehicles; and ATVs may be registered only as medium-speed vehicles.

References

Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 55-1-122, 55-1-125, 55-3-101, 44-4-111, 55-4-136, 55-8-101, 55-8-185, 55-8-203;; 2016 Tenn. Pub. Acts, ch. 790; 2016 Tenn. Pub. Acts, ch. 982; 49 CFR 571.500.