



Massachusetts Recreation Vehicle Safety Laws

The following abstract summarizes some important Massachusetts recreation vehicle laws. For the complete law refer to Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 90B (Sections 20-35) and 323 Code of Massachusetts (CMR) 3.00.

Definitions

“Recreation vehicle” or “off-highway vehicle” - Any motor vehicle designed or modified for use over unimproved terrain for recreation or pleasure while not on a public way. This includes all-terrain vehicles, off-highway motorcycles, dirt bikes, and recreation utility vehicles. Also included are all registered motor vehicles when operated off of a public way.

“All-terrain vehicle” – a motorized recreation vehicle designed or modified for travel on 4 low pressure tires and having a seat designed to be straddled by the operator and handlebars for steering control.

“Dirt bike” – a recreation vehicle that is a lightweight motorcycle, equipped with two in-line wheels, designed for operation on unpaved surfaces, dirt roads, and trails.

“Recreation utility vehicle” or “utility vehicle” – a motorized flotation tire vehicle with not less than 4 and not more than 6 low pressure tires that is limited in engine displacement to less than 1,500 cubic centimeters and in total dry weight to not more than 1,800 pounds and that has a seat that is of bench design, not intended to be straddled by the operator, and a steering wheel for control.

Age Restrictions

- ◆ No person under 18 years of age shall operate a recreation vehicle or recreation utility vehicle unless he has successfully completed an approved recreation vehicle safety and responsibility course. For information, contact the Boat & RV Safety Bureau at (508)564-4961 or www.mass.gov/dfwele/dle/boatrvsafe.htm
- ◆ No person under the age of 16½ shall operate a recreation vehicle across a public way unless directly supervised by an adult (18 years of age or older). The public way and the crossing must be marked and approved for recreation vehicle use.
- ◆ No person between 14 - 16 years of age shall operate an all-terrain vehicle or a recreation utility vehicle with an engine capacity greater than 90 cubic centimeters. When operating such vehicles 90 cubic centimeters or less, persons between 14 - 16 years of age must be directly supervised by an adult.
- ◆ No person between 10 - 14 years of age shall operate a recreation vehicle unless directly supervised by an adult while in preparation for, or while participating in, a sanctioned race, rally, or organized event which has been approved by a municipal permitting authority. If operating an all-terrain vehicle or a recreation utility vehicle, engine capacity must be equal to or less than 90 cubic centimeters.
- ◆ Persons under 10 years of age may only operate an age/size appropriate dirt bike under direct adult supervision while in preparation for, or while participating in, a sanctioned event which has been approved by a municipal permitting authority. Preparation for such an event may only occur on private property.

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Prohibited Operation

The following are some examples of prohibited operation:

- ◆ Operating under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- ◆ Operating on public ways or upon or across a controlled access highway.
- ◆ Failure to come to a complete stop when crossing an approved public way (must yield to motor vehicle traffic).
- ◆ Operating at an unreasonable, improper, or unsafe speed for existing conditions.
- ◆ Operating on land of another without written permission of the owner.
- ◆ Operating within 150 feet of a residence without permission of the owner.
- ◆ Operating a vehicle which emits noxious fumes or makes excessive noise.
- ◆ Operating in a manner that causes damage to public or private property.
- ◆ Operating on an ocean beach or sand dune in a manner so as to destroy, damage or break down any beach, dune or dune grass.
- ◆ Operating in a manner so as to harass or chase wildlife or domestic animals.
- ◆ Operating on any public property not designated for recreation vehicle use.

Safety Equipment

Persons operating, riding on, or being towed by a recreation vehicle shall wear an approved helmet. Each recreation vehicle must also be equipped with an adequate braking system. An adequate muffler designed to reduce unusual or excessive noise and noxious fumes is required. Each recreation vehicle must be equipped with one or more headlights, a red rear light and red rear reflector when operated after sunset. A trailer attached to a recreation vehicle must have a red rear reflector.

Registration, Decals and Trail Permits

Recreation vehicles operated on public or private property must be registered through the Massachusetts Environmental Police, except if used exclusively for agricultural, forestry, lumbering or construction purposes. Application for said exemption is required. Out-of-state recreation vehicle registrations are not valid in Massachusetts.

The assigned registration decals shall be firmly attached to both sides of the vehicle and located so that both are clearly visible. The validation date shall be displayed on the left side of the vehicle. The registration certificate shall be in the possession of the operator.

For further registration information, contact the Environmental Police at (617) 626-1610, or visit www.mass.gov/dfwele/dle/elereg.htm.

Accidents

The operator or owner of a recreation vehicle involved in a collision, accident or other such casualty resulting in death or injury to a person or damage to property in excess of \$50.00 shall notify a law enforcement officer immediately and file a written report of the incident with the MA Environmental Police within 48 hours. To obtain report forms or further safety/legal information contact the Boat & RV Safety Bureau at (508) 564-4961 or www.mass.gov/dfwele/dle/boatrvsafe.htm

Violations

To report violations of recreation vehicle or snowmobile laws, or other environmental or wildlife laws, contact the Environmental Police Radio Communications Center at 1-800-632-8075.