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Is Your Golf Cart Street Legal?



By [Brette Sember, J.D.](#) on August 26, 2021 7:24 AM

Golf carts are becoming more and more popular as a mode of transportation. They're smaller, less expensive than cars, and as most are rechargeable electric vehicles, they are affordable to drive.

Golf carts are an attractive way to travel short distances. The Villages, a large retirement city in Florida, alone is home to 50,000 golf carts, which are the primary mode of transportation for residents.

Put It in Drive

The laws about golf carts being street legal vary from state to state and can even vary from city to city, as well as for the type of road (local or state). In general, golf carts are legal to some extent in some areas in most states. In many states, golf carts are only allowed when a specific community passes a law allowing them on their roads.

Golf carts are completely banned from all roadways in [Hawaii](#) and [New York](#).

The legality of golf carts is a hot topic in many communities. In Galveston, Texas, for example, [many residents have been urging the city to ban them from city streets](#), citing irresponsible driving and safety concerns. The local paper has been flooded with letters from citizens on both sides of the issue.

Tricked Out

States that do allow golf carts on the streets usually have requirements for safety features. Federal laws require all golf carts to have headlamps, tail lights, VIN numbers, seatbelts, turn signals, reflectors, mirrors, parking brakes, and windshields.

States often set even more restrictions. [California, for example, expands federal rules](#) by requiring that golf carts not exceed 1300 pounds, two passengers, and the ability to exceed 15 mph.

States usually ban golf carts from any road with a speed limit that is over 35 mph and require anyone driving one to have a valid driver's license. Those caught speeding can receive a ticket just like any other driver.

Police take these laws seriously, particularly when it comes to teens. [Glynn County, Georgia, police officer Earl Wilson told The Brunswick News](#): "Any rules that apply to a teenager driving a vehicle apply to a teenager driving a golf cart. These vehicles are not toys. They are thousand-pound vehicles on the road at times with large pickups and semi-trailer trucks. They've got to treat them as transportation that comes with responsibility."

No Mulligans for Injuries

More and more, communities are considering and enacting regulations about golf carts on area roadways due to injuries. There are [more than 18,000 injuries each year](#) involving golf carts across the U.S. In The Villages alone each year there are 136 crashes, 65 hospitalizations, and nine deaths, with 48% of the crashes there resulting in hospitalizations. Most occur on streets or roads, and not on golf courses.

[Those most at risk for injury in a golf cart accident](#) are boys ages 10 to 19 and seniors over age 80, according to a study from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are one of the most common types of injuries from golf cart accidents. Gerald McGwin, a UAB professor of epidemiology said, "Have you ever seen what a Suburban can do to a golf cart at 35 miles per hour?"

The answer to the injuries and related concerns may be improved safety and driver education. To that end, the National Golf Cart Association [has created an ebook](#) to educate those using golf carts and reduce accidents.

As for whether you can hit your local streets in a golf cart, if you are unsure, the best place to check would be city hall or the police department.

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