

Motor Scooter Registration

By: Heather Poole, Associate Analyst
October 16, 2020 | 2020-R-0257

Issue

This report (1) explains when a motor scooter must be registered in Connecticut, (2) lists recent motor scooter registration proposals, and (3) identifies which states require motor scooter registration. This report updates OLR Report [2015-R-0253](#).

Summary

The term “motor scooter” usually refers to two- or three-wheeled vehicles with seats, relatively small motors, and low top speeds. It is sometimes used interchangeably with “moped” (i.e., a vehicle with both bicycle pedals and a motor). In Connecticut, these vehicles typically fall under the definition of “motor-driven cycles,” which do not need to be registered with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) before being operated on public roads.

Whether a motor scooter must be registered with DMV depends primarily on its engine size. Motor scooters with engines 50 cubic centimeters (cc) or larger must register as a motorcycle; those with engines smaller than 50 cc are exempt from registration. Since 2010, seven proposed bills have been introduced to require motor scooters to be registered in Connecticut, but none have made it out of committee.

Forty-two states and the District of Columbia generally require registration of some or all of the vehicles considered motor-driven cycles in Connecticut, while eight states generally exempt them from registration.

“Motor-Driven Cycles”

Motor scooters are generally considered “motor-driven cycles” under Connecticut law.

Motor-driven cycles may be operated on public roads without registering with DMV.

Connecticut

Motor Scooter Registration Requirements

Connecticut law requires motor vehicles to be registered with DMV. But it exempts “motor-driven cycles” from the definition of “motor vehicles” ([CGS § 14-1 \(59\)](#)). A motor-driven cycle is any of the following with a seat at least 26 inches high and a motor displacing less than 50 cc: a (1) motorcycle, (2) motor scooter, or (3) bicycle with attached motor, except electric bicycles ([CGS § 14-1 \(58\)](#)).

Thus, scooters with engines 50 cc or larger must register with DMV, and those with smaller engines do not. (If a scooter has a seat height of less than 26 inches, it is considered a “mini-motorcycle” and may not be operated on public roads or sidewalks ([CGS § 14-289j](#)). Thus, these vehicles cannot be registered.)

Legislative History and Recent Proposals

Prior to 1976, scooters and mopeds were considered motorcycles. But in 1976, the legislature removed “bicycles with helper motors” from the laws’ motorcycle requirements and instead treated them as bicycles. In 2008, the legislature replaced this definition with the broader category of “motor-driven cycles.” OLR Report [2015-R-0253](#) provides a detailed legislative history of these changes.

We identified seven proposed bills introduced since 2010 that relate to motor scooter registration, listed below in Table 1. Six of them proposed requiring registration of all motor scooters; one (2019 H.B. 6773) proposed allowing municipalities and higher education institutions to require registration of motor scooters used in the municipality or on the institution’s property. Although most of the proposals received a public hearing, the Transportation Committee did not report any of the bills out of committee.

Proponents of these proposals have argued that there has been a concerning increase in motor scooter operators disobeying the law, and that registration would (1) help law enforcement officers enforce the laws and (2) act as a means of enforcing an insurance requirement, which some proposals also seek to establish (Senator MacLachlan’s [testimony](#) on 2017 S.B. 307 and Rep. Luxenberg’s [testimony](#) on 2014 H.B. 6034). DMV has testified in opposition to registering motor scooters, stating that “passage of these bills would require costly system and process changes” ([DMV testimony](#) on S.B. 307 and H.B. 6279, 2017).

Table 1: Legislative Proposals on Motor Scooter Registration, 2010-2020

<i>Year</i>	<i>Bill Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Last Action</i>
2013	Proposed H.B. 6032	An Act Concerning the Registration and Operation of Certain Motor-Driven Cycles	Public Hearing
2013	Proposed H.B. 6034	An Act Requiring Insurance Coverage for and the Registration of Certain Mopeds, Scooters and Motorbikes	Public Hearing
2015	Proposed H.B. 5536	An Act Concerning Regulation of Motor-Driven Cycles	Public Hearing
2017	Proposed S.B. 307	An Act Requiring the Registration of Motor-Driven Cycles	Public Hearing
2017	Proposed H.B. 6277	An Act Requiring the Registration of Motor Scooters	Vote to Draft*
2017	Proposed H.B. 6279	An Act Concerning the Registration of Motor-Driven Cycles	Public Hearing
2019	Proposed H.B. 6773	An Act Concerning the Local Regulation of Motor Scooters	Referred to Transportation Committee

*HB 6277 (2017) was not drafted.

Other States' Laws

Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia generally require registration of all vehicles considered motor-driven cycles in Connecticut, six states require registration of some of these vehicles, and eight states generally exempt them from registration.

Vehicle definitions vary widely between states. In some states, vehicles considered motor-driven cycles in Connecticut are considered motorcycles; in others, these vehicles fall under two or three definitions (e.g., moped, motorized bicycle, or motor scooter). Some states draw a distinction between vehicles that have operable foot pedals in addition to a motor and those that do not.

Table 2 indicates whether each state requires registration of vehicles that are considered motor-driven cycles in Connecticut. States that require only some such vehicles to be registered usually (1) exempt certain low-powered vehicles (e.g., those with motors under 30cc) or (2) exempt vehicles with operable foot pedals. We considered only those vehicles that may legally be operated on public roads (e.g., if some are not street legal in a state but the others must be registered, the table indicates yes rather than some).

Table 2. State Registration Requirements for Motor-Driven Cycles*

<i>State</i>	<i>Registration Required?</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Registration Required?</i>
Alabama	Yes ⁱ	Montana	Some ⁱⁱ
Alaska	Yes ⁱⁱⁱ	Nebraska	Some ^{iv}
Arizona	Yes ^v	Nevada	Yes ^{vi}
Arkansas	Some ^{vii}	New Hampshire	Yes ^{viii}
California	Yes ^{ix}	New Jersey	Yes ^x
Colorado	Yes ^{xi}	New Mexico	No ^{xii}
Connecticut	No	New York	Yes ^{xiii}
Delaware	Yes ^{xiv}	North Carolina	Yes ^{xv}
District of Columbia	Yes ^{xvi}	North Dakota	Yes ^{xvii}
Florida	Yes ^{xviii}	Ohio	Yes ^{xix}
Georgia	No ^{xx}	Oklahoma	Yes ^{xxi}
Hawaii	Yes ^{xxii}	Oregon	Some ^{xxiii}
Idaho	No ^{xxiv}	Pennsylvania	Yes ^{xxv}
Illinois	Yes ^{xxvi}	Rhode Island	Yes ^{xxvii}
Indiana	Yes ^{xxviii}	South Carolina	Yes ^{xxix}
Iowa	Yes ^{xxx}	South Dakota	No ^{xxxii}
Kansas	Yes ^{xxxiii}	Tennessee	Yes ^{xxxiiii}
Kentucky	No ^{xxxiv}	Texas	Yes ^{xxxv}
Louisiana	Yes ^{xxxvi}	Utah	Yes ^{xxxvii}
Maine	Some ^{xxxviii}	Vermont	Yes ^{xxxix}
Maryland	No ^{xl}	Virginia	Yes ^{xli}
Massachusetts	Yes ^{xlii}	Washington	Yes ^{xliii}
Michigan	Yes ^{xliv}	West Virginia	Yes ^{xlv}
Minnesota	Yes ^{xlvi}	Wisconsin	Yes ^{xlvii}
Mississippi	Yes ^{xlviii}	Wyoming	Some ^{xlix}
Missouri	No ^l		

*as defined under Connecticut law

ⁱ [Ala. Admin. Code r. 810-5-1-238](#); AAA Digest of Motor Laws, [Mopeds & Other](#)

ⁱⁱ Mont. Code Ann. §§ [61-3-301](#) & [61-1-101](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Alaska Stat. § 28.10.421\(b\)\(4\)](#); [Alaska Stat. § 28.90.990\(a\)\(20\)](#)

^{iv} [Mopeds](#), Nebraska DMV

^v AAA

^{vi} [Mopeds](#), Nevada DMV

^{vii} [Ark. Code Ann. §§ 27-20-101](#) & [-105](#)

^{viii} [Registration](#), New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles; [N.H. Rev. Stat. § 259:57](#)

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- ix [Motorcycles, Mopeds, and Scooters](#), California DMV
 - x [Moped/Snowmobile/Dirt Bike/ATV/Agricultural](#), New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission
 - xi [Low-powered Scooter](#), Colorado Division of Motor Vehicles
 - xii [Chapter 18-Other Vehicles](#), *Vehicles Procedure Manual*, New Mexico Motor Vehicle Department
 - xiii [Register a Moped](#), New York DMV
 - xiv [Mopeds and Tripeds](#) & [Motor Scooters](#), Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles
 - xv [Moped Requirements](#), North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT)
 - xvi [“Synopsis of Non-Traditional Motor Vehicles, Other Vehicles and DC Law.”](#) DC DMV
 - xvii [North Dakota Motor Vehicle Registration Information](#), North Dakota DOT, pg I-16 & I-17
 - xviii [Motorcycle, Motor Scooter, Moped and Motorized Scooter](#), Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
 - xix [Motorized Bicycle \(Moped\) Registration Application](#), Ohio Department of Public Safety
 - xx [Mopeds and Scooters](#), Georgia Department of Driver Services
 - xxi Okla. Admin. Code [§ 710:60-3-70](#)
 - xxii [Moped Registration Information](#), Honolulu Department of Customer Services; [Haw. Rev. Stat. §286-2](#)
 - xxiii [Oregon Moped, Motorized Scooter, Pocket Bike Guide](#), Oregon DMV
 - xxiv [Requirements for Two and Three Wheeled Vehicles](#), Idaho Transportation Department
 - xxv [Fact Sheet: Mopeds, Motor-Driven Cycles and Motorcycles](#), Pennsylvania DOT & Drivers Services
 - xxvi [Illinois Motorcycle Operator’s Manual](#), Illinois Secretary of State, pg. 3; AAA
 - xxvii [31 R.I. Gen. Law § 31-3-2.2](#)
 - xxviii [Motorcycle and Motor Driven Cycle Classifications](#), Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV)
 - xxix S.C.Code Ann. §§ [56-2-3010](#) & [56-1-10 \(26\)](#)
 - xxx [Motorcycles and Mopeds](#), Iowa Department of Transportation
 - xxxi [S.D. Codified Laws § 32-5-1.2](#)
 - xxxii [Kan. Stat. Ann. § 8-127](#)
 - xxxiii [Vehicle Registration](#), Tennessee Department of Revenue
 - xxxiv [Ky. Rev. Stat. § 186.010](#); AAA
 - xxxv [Register your Vehicle](#), Texas DMV; [Tex. Veh. & Traff. § 541.201\(8\)](#)
 - xxxvi [Policy 30.00 Mopeds or Motorized Bicycles](#), Louisiana Department of Public Safety
 - xxxvii [Motorcycles](#), Utah DMV; [Utah Code § 41-6a-102](#)
 - xxxviii [Information on Off-Road Vehicles, Motorized Scooters, Mopeds & Motorcycles](#), Maine BMV
 - xxxix 23 Vt. Stat. Ann. [§ 364a](#) & [§ 4\(45\)](#)
 - xl AAA; Mopeds and motor scooters must obtain one-time [title decal](#)
 - xli [Mopeds](#), Virginia DMV; [VA Code Ann. § 46.2-100](#)
 - xlii [Apply for a Moped Registration](#), Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles
 - xliii [Mopeds](#), Washington State Department of Licensing
 - xliv [What is considered a moped? Are they Registered?](#) Michigan Secretary of State
 - xlv [Motor Vehicle Registration Fees](#), West Virginia DMV
 - xlvi [Motorcycle and Motorized Bicycle Manual](#), Minnesota Department of Public Safety, pg. VI & VII
 - xlvii [Mopeds](#), Wisconsin DOT
 - xlviii [Motor Vehicle Licensing FAQs](#), Mississippi Department of Revenue
 - xliv [Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 31-1-101](#)

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