

Massachusetts Recreation Vehicle Safety Laws

The following abstracts summarize some important Massachusetts recreation vehicle laws as of August 2001. For the complete law refer to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 90B (Sections 20-35) and 323 Code of Massachusetts Regulations 3.00, available in booklet form.

Recreation Vehicle-Defined

Any motor vehicle designed or modified for use over unimproved terrain, if used for recreation or pleasure off a public way. Also, includes all legally registered motor vehicles when used off a public way. Any motor vehicle registered under Chapter 90 will not be subject to registration under Chapter 90B, but must display a current motor vehicle registration.

Age Restrictions

- No person under 14 years of age shall operate a recreation vehicle, except as provided below:
- A person who is 12 or 13 years of age may operate if directly supervised by a person 18 years of age or older.
- A person, who is 10 or 11 years of age, may operate if directly supervised by a person 18 years old or older and the vehicle is operated on land upon which the operator lives.
- A person under 14 years of age may operate in a sanctioned race, rally, or organized event, which has been approved by the appropriate local authority.
- Under no circumstances, may a person operate who is less than 10 years of age.
- No person under the age of 16 and ½ years of age shall operate a recreation vehicle across a public way.

Prohibited Operation: The following are examples of prohibited operation

- Operating under the influence of drugs and alcohol.
- Operating on public ways or upon the right-of-way limits of a controlled access highway.
- Failure to come to a complete stop when crossing a public way (must yield to motor vehicle traffic). No person under 16½ years of age shall operate across a public way.
- Operating so as to endanger any person or property.
- Operating at an unreasonable, improper, and unsafe speed for existing conditions.

- Operating on land of another without permission of the owner. (Permission may be given to an individual or group).
- Operating within 150 feet of an occupied residence without permission of the owner.
- 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 a wetland such as a bog, marsh, or swamp so as to destroy or damage the wetland, if such area has been designated and posted as a protected wetland area.
- Operating in Wildlife Management Areas.

Safety Equipment

Persons operating or riding on 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 obnoxious fumes is required. Each recreation vehicle must be equipped with and display after sunset, one or more headlights, a red rear light and red rear reflector. Trailers attached to recreation vehicle must have a red rear reflector.

Trail Etiquette

Observing trail etiquette is important, particularly when trails are heavily used. Whenever possible all recreation vehicles shall keep to the right side of trails. Please stay within the trail corridor and respect adjacent private and public land. When passing hikers, horseback riders, and other such trail users, operators shall reduce speed, yield right-of-way, and not pass until it can be accomplished with complete safety. Operators shall not accelerate until beyond 50 feet of such trail users.

Registration, Decals and Trail Permits

- Recreation vehicles operated on public or private property must be registered through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, except if used solely on land owned by the operator. Out-of-state recreation vehicle registrations are not valid in Massachusetts.
- The registration certificate shall be in possession for examination by a law enforcement officer or landowner.
- The registration plate shall be displayed on the back of each recreation vehicle.

- For further registration information call (617) 626-1610.

Violations

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

Riding Area Information

The state Department of Conservation and Recreation has designated areas and trails for the use of recreation vehicles. For additional information contact the regional DCR offices or their main Boston office at (617) 626-1250.

Accidents

The operator or owner of a recreation vehicle involved in a collision, accident or other such causality 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 Massachusetts Environmental Police within 48 hours. To obtain accident report forms or further safety/legal information contact the Boat & RV Safety Bureau at (508) 759-0002.

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