

LS Low Speed Vehicle – must comply with the safety standards in 49 CFR part 571.500, it will be licensed as an automobile and documents to register would include:

1. Manufacturer's Certificate of Origin which states vehicle meets or exceeds the minimal Federal Safety requirements for Low Speed vehicles as set forth in Federal Regulations, Title 49 CFR part 571.500
2. In addition to the federal requirements, North Carolina General Statutes requires all vehicles to be equipped with a speedometer, odometer and windshield wiper.
3. Out of State Low Speed vehicles require an Inspector's report.
4. \$40.00 title fee.
5. Highway use tax based on 3% of computer value.
6. \$28.00 license fee for an automobile plate.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
49 CFR Part 571
[Docket No. NHTSA 98-3949]
RIN 2127-AG58
Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), DOT.

ACTION: Final rule

SUMMARY: This final rule responds to a growing public interest in using golf cars⁽¹⁾ and other similar-sized, 4-wheeled vehicles to make short trips for shopping, social and recreational purposes primarily within retirement or other planned communities with golf courses. These passenger-carrying vehicles, although low-speed, offer a variety of advantages, including comparatively low-cost and energy-efficient mobility. Further, many of these vehicles are electric-powered. The use of these vehicles, instead of larger, gasoline-powered vehicles like passenger cars, provides quieter transportation that does not pollute the air of the communities in which they are operated.

Currently, there is a growing conflict between state and local laws, on the one hand, and Federal law, on the other, in the treatment of these small vehicles. That conflict unnecessarily restricts the ability of vehicle manufacturers to produce and sell, and the ability of consumers to purchase, these vehicles. In recent years, a growing number of states from California to Florida have passed legislation authorizing their local jurisdictions to permit general on-road use of "golf carts," subject to speed and/or operational limitations. A majority of those states condition such broad use upon the vehicles' having specified safety equipment. Further, some of these states have opened the way for the use of vehicles that are faster than almost all golf cars. Most

conventional golf cars, as originally manufactured, have a top speed of less than 15 miles per hour. These states have either redefined "golf carts" to include vehicles designed to achieve up to 25 miles per hour or have established a new class of vehicles, "neighborhood electric vehicles," also defined as capable of achieving 25 miles per hour.

Under current NHTSA interpretations and regulations, so long as golf cars and other similar vehicles are incapable of exceeding 20 miles per hour, they are subject to only state and local requirements regarding safety equipment. However, if these vehicles are originally manufactured so that they can go faster than 20 miles per hour, they are treated as motor vehicles under Federal law. Similarly, if golf cars are modified after original manufacture so that they can achieve 20 or more miles per hour, they too are treated as motor vehicles. Further, as motor vehicles, they are currently classified as passenger cars and must comply with the Federal motor vehicle safety standards for that vehicle type. This creates a conflict with the state and local laws because compliance with the full range of those standards is not feasible for these small vehicles.

To resolve this conflict, and to permit the manufacture and sale of small, 4-wheeled motor vehicles with top speeds of 20 to 25 miles per hour, this final rule reclassifies these small passenger-carrying vehicles. Instead of being classified as passenger cars, they are now being classified as "low-speed vehicles." Since conventional golf cars, as presently manufactured, have a top speed of less than 20 miles per hour, they are not included in that classification.

As low-speed vehicles, these 20 to 25 mile-per-hour vehicles are subject to a new Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 500 (49 CFR 571.500) established by this final rule. The agency notes that the growing on-road use of golf cars has already resulted in some deaths and serious injuries, and believes that the new standard is needed to address the effects in crashes of the higher speed of low-speed vehicles. The standard requires low-speed vehicles to be equipped with headlamps, stop lamps, turn signal lamps, taillamps, reflex reflectors, parking brakes, rearview mirrors, windshields, seat belts, and vehicle identification numbers. The agency believes that these requirements appropriately address the safety of low-speed vehicle occupants and other roadway users, given the sub-25 mph speed capability of these vehicles and the controlled environments in which they operate.

This rulemaking proceeding was initiated in response to a request by Bombardier, Inc., that the agency make regulatory changes to permit the introduction of a new class of 4-wheeled, passenger-carrying vehicle that is small, relatively slow-moving, and low-cost.