



State of California
DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL
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CHP 888
MOTORCYCLE, MOTOR-DRIVEN CYCLE, AND MOTORIZED BICYCLE REQUIREMENTS

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(Destroy Previous Editions)

California Vehicle Code requirements pertaining to motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, and motorized bicycles are summarized herein. If more exact information is required, the legal language is contained in the Vehicle Code which may be purchased at any office of the Department of Motor Vehicles for \$3.00, including tax. Additional regulations pertaining to lights and devices extracted from Title 13, California Code of Regulations (CCR), are incorporated herein. The full text of Title 13, CCR, may be purchased from: Barclays Law Publishers, Attn.: Client Services, P.O. Box 3066, So. San Francisco, CA 94083.

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Items of equipment required on motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, and motorized bicycles are listed together with the bulletin page number where the item is discussed. Unless otherwise noted, the requirements herein apply to motorcycles, motor-driven cycles and motorized bicycles.

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SUMMARIZED VEHICLE CODE PROVISIONS

The number(s) in parentheses following the paragraph title indicates the Vehicle Code section(s) summarized.

Darkness (280). "Darkness" is any time from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise and any other time when visibility is not sufficient to render clearly discernible any person or vehicle on the highway at a distance of 1,000 feet.

Highway (360). "Highway" is a way or place of whatever nature, publicly maintained and open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel. Highway includes street.

Motorcycle (400). A "motorcycle" is any motor vehicle other than a tractor having a seat or saddle for the use of the rider and designed to travel on not more than three wheels in contact with the ground, except that four wheels may be in contact with the ground if two of the wheels are a functional part of a side car, and weighing less than 1,500 pounds or, if electrically powered, weighing not more than 2,500 pounds and having a maximum speed of 45 miles per hour.

Motor-driven Cycle (405). A "motor-driven cycle" is any motorcycle with a motor which displaces less than 150 cubic centimeters and every bicycle with motor attached. A motor-driven cycle does not include a motorized bicycle, as defined in Section 406.

Motorized Bicycle (406). A "motorized bicycle" or "moped" is any two-wheeled or three-wheeled device having fully operative pedals for propulsion by human power, or having no pedals if powered solely by electrical energy, and an automatic transmission and a motor which produces less than 2 gross brake horsepower and is capable of propelling the device at a maximum speed of not more than 30 miles per hour on level ground.

Motorized Quadricycle (407). A "motorized quadricycle" is a four-wheeled device designed to carry not more than two persons, including the driver, and having either an electric motor or a motor with an automatic transmission developing less than two gross brake horsepower and capable of propelling the device at a maximum speed of not more than 30 miles per hour on level ground. The device shall be utilized only by a person who by reason of physical disability is otherwise unable to move about as a pedestrian or by a senior citizen as defined in Section 13000.

Note: "Minibikes," "tote-goats," "trail bikes," and similar vehicles may fall within the category of either motorcycle or motor-driven cycle, depending on brake horsepower, and if such vehicles are operated upon the highway. They must meet applicable equipment requirements. A motorized bicycle, as defined in Section 406, has a motor which produces less than 2 gross brake horsepower. A motorized bicycle does not have the

same equipment requirements as either a motor-driven cycle or a motorcycle.

Registration Card (4454, 4462 4020, 5030). The registration card or facsimile thereof shall be kept with the vehicle for which issued and shall be presented for examination upon demand of any peace officer. A motorized bicycle is exempt from registration, but is required to display a special license plate.

License Plate (5200, 5201, 5204). The license plate shall be rigidly mounted on the rear of the vehicle, approximately perpendicular to and between 12 inches and 60 inches above the roadway and must be clearly legible. Validating tabs are to be attached to the plate. No covering is permitted on the plate.

Driver's License (12804.9). In 1989, California began issuing a new series of license classes (Class A, B, C, M-1, and M-2). Beginning on January 1, 1993, all Class 1, 2, 3, and 4 driver licenses are no longer valid for motor vehicle operation. With the enactment of 12804.9, the "motorcycle" class or endorsement has been divided into two categories (M-1 and M-2). The holder of a Class M-1 driver license or endorsement to a valid Class A, B, or C driver license may operate any two-wheel motorcycle or any two-wheel motor-driven cycle. The holder of a Class M-2 driver license may only operate any two-wheel motor-driven cycle. A two-wheel motor-driven cycle includes, but is not limited to, a motorized bicycle or moped, or any bicycle with an attached motor. The holder of a valid driver license of any class may operate a motorized bicycle without taking any special examination and without having an M-1 or M-2 endorsement on such license, until December 31, 1993.

Note: If a Class M-2 driver license is issued solely for the purpose of operating a motorized bicycle, it will be endorsed on the back of the license "may operate a motorized bicycle only."

Modifications to Motorized Bicycles (23135). It is unlawful for any person to operate on a highway any vehicle which was originally manufactured as a motorized bicycle, as defined in Section 406, which has been modified in such a manner that it no longer conforms to the definition of a motorized bicycle.

Vehicle Not Equipped or Unsafe (24002). It is unlawful to operate any vehicle or combination of vehicles which is in an unsafe condition, which is not equipped as required by the Vehicle Code, or which is not safely loaded.

Vehicle With Unlawful Lamps (24003). No vehicle shall be equipped with any lamp or illuminating device not required or permitted by the Vehicle Code.

Installation of Unlawful Equipment (24005). It is unlawful for any person to install or sell for use on a vehicle, any kind of equipment that does not conform to the Vehicle Code or regulations made thereunder.

Unsafe Condition (24008.5). An "unsafe condition" within the meaning of Section 24002 includes, but is not limited to, the raising of the center of gravity or other modification of a vehicle so as to unsafely affect its operation or stability.

Compliance With Federal Standards (24011). Whenever a federal motor vehicle safety standard is established under the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, no dealer shall sell or offer for sale a vehicle to which the standard is

applicable, and no person shall sell or offer for sale for use upon a vehicle an item of equipment to which the standard is applicable, unless:

(a) Such vehicle or equipment conforms to the applicable federal standard.

(b) The vehicle or equipment bears a certification that it complies with the applicable federal standards.

Motorized Bicycle: Compliance with Federal Safety Standards (24015). Motorized bicycles shall comply with those federal motor vehicle safety standards established under the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 which are applicable to a motor-driven cycle, as that term is defined in such federal standards. Such standards include, but are not limited to, provisions requiring a headlamp, taillamp, stoplamp, side and rear reflectors, and adequate brakes. In addition, all motorized bicycles operated upon a highway shall be equipped with a mirror, a horn, and an adequate muffler as required by the Vehicle Code.

Motorized Quadricycle: Equipment Requirements (24016). Motorized quadricycles, as defined in Section 407, shall comply with the requirements contained in this division which are applicable to motor-driven cycles, as defined in Section 405.

Maintenance of Lamps and Devices (24252). All lighting equipment of a required type installed on a vehicle shall be maintained in good working order.

(a) Lamps shall be equipped with bulbs of the correct voltage rating corresponding to the nominal voltage at the lamp socket. The voltage at any tail, stop, license plate, sidemarker or clearance lamp socket on a vehicle shall not be less than 85 percent of the design voltage of the bulb. Voltage tests shall be conducted with the engine operating.

(b) Two or more lamp or reflector functions may be combined provided each required function meets the specifications. No turn signal lamp may be combined with a stoplamp unless the stoplamp is extinguished when the turn signal is flashing.

Battery (24253). All motorcycles manufactured and first registered after January 1, 1970, shall be equipped with a battery capable of keeping all taillamps lighted for a period of 15 minutes with the engine inoperative. The vehicle must also be equipped to recharge the battery. All motorcycles manufactured and first registered after January 1, 1971, shall be equipped so all taillamps when turned on, will remain lighted automatically for a period of at least 15 minutes if the engine stops. (Does not apply to motorized bicycles.)

Mounting of Lamps and Reflectors (24254, 13 CCR 671). Devices installed on a vehicle shall be mounted on a rigid part of the vehicle and shall be maintained with proper aim both when the vehicle is stationary and when it is in motion. The mounted height of lamps or reflectors shall be measured from the center of the lamp or reflector to the level surface upon which the vehicle stands. No lighting device shall be mounted behind any portion of the vehicle, load, or vehicle equipment which interferes with the distribution of light or decreases its intensity unless an additional device is installed to comply with the requirements.

All taillamps, stoplamps, and turn signal lamps shall be mounted so the main portion of the light beam is essentially parallel to the road and projects directly to the front, side, or rear

depending on mounting location. Mounting heights for lamps are listed in individual sections.

Reflex reflectors shall be mounted with the lens perpendicular to the road facing directly to the front, side, or rear depending on mounting location. Reflectors or lamps on flaps are not properly mounted unless flaps are rigid. Reflectors must be mounted between 15 inches and 60 inches above the roadway.

Beam Indicator (24408). A motorcycle registered after January 1, 1940, which has a multiple-beam headlamp shall have a beam indicator which shall be lighted only when the headlamp is on high beam. The indicator must be designed and located to be readily visible without glare to the driver, must not exceed 2 candlepower, and must not show to the front or sides of the vehicle. (Does not apply to motorized bicycles.)

Taillamps (24600). One or more lighted red taillamps are required on the rear during darkness. The taillamp must be plainly visible from all distances within 500 feet to the rear. Taillamps on vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1969, must be visible from 1,000 feet to the rear and shall be mounted between 15 and 72 inches above the roadway.

License Plate Lamp (24601). Either the taillamp or a separate lamp is required to illuminate the surface of the license plate with a white light during darkness. The license plate must be legible from a distance of 50 feet. The lamp must be controlled by the switch controlling the taillamp. For vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1973, the lamp shall be mounted above or at the side of the plate. (Does not apply to motorized bicycles.)

Fog Taillamps (24602). Any vehicle may be equipped with not more than two fog taillamps mounted on the rear which may be lighted, in addition to the required taillamps, only when atmospheric conditions, such as fog, rain, snow, smoke, or dust, reduce the daytime or nighttime visibility of other vehicles to less than 500 feet. If two lamps are installed one shall be mounted on the left and one on the right, on the same level, as close as practical to the sides. Mounting shall be between 15 inches and 60 inches from the roadway and the edge of the lens shall be no closer than four inches from the edge of any stoplamp lens. Lamps must be wired to operate only when headlamps are on and shall have a switch which allows the fog taillamps to be turned off independently of the headlamps. A nonflashing amber pilot light shall be lighted when lamps are turned on which is readily visible to the driver.

Stoplamp (24603). At least one red or yellow stoplamp is required on the rear at all times. Stoplamps on vehicles manufactured on or after January 1, 1979, shall emit a red light only. The stoplamp must be actuated upon application of the brake and be visible from 300 feet to the rear. Stoplamps may also be actuated upon sudden release of the accelerator while the vehicle is in motion. Stoplamps on vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1969, shall be mounted between 15 and 72 inches above the roadway.

Note: Stoplamps on motorized bicycles need only be one-half as bright as stoplamps on motorcycles.

Reflectors on Rear (24607). At least one red reflector either separate or in combination with a required lamp shall be mounted on the rear of the vehicle between 15 inches and 60 inches above the roadway. Additional approved reflectors may be mounted at any height. (Does not apply to motorized bicycles.)

Reflectors on Front and Sides (24608, 24609). Any vehicle may be equipped with white or amber reflectors on the front, one amber reflector on each side as far forward as practicable, and one red reflector on each side as far aft as practicable. The reflectors shall be mounted between 15 and 60 inches above the roadway. Additional reflectors may be mounted at any height. Area reflectorizing material may be used in lieu of the permitted reflectors provided photometric requirements are met.

Turn Signals (24951, 24952, 24953). A turn signal system, if installed, shall include four turn signal lamps, two single-faced or two double-faced front lamps, and two single-faced rear lamps. The two lamps at each end shall be mounted at least nine inches apart and as far apart as practicable, with the front lamps at least four inches from the nearest luminous edge of the low beam headlamp. Motorcycles manufactured and first registered on or after January 1, 1973, except motor-driven cycles if speed attainable in one mile is 30 mph or less, are required to be equipped with turn signal systems with the front turn signal lamps spaced at least 16 inches apart and the rear turn signal lamps spaced at least 9 inches apart. The lamp shall be so connected that the front and rear lamps on the side toward which a turn is signaled shall flash simultaneously. The system shall also include a flasher and a visual indicator to the driver that the turn signal lamps are on. The rear sections of double-faced front lamps may serve as the required indicators. The lamps shall project white or amber light to the front and red or amber light to the rear. The lamps must be plainly visible from 300 feet to front and rear. On vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1969, the turn signal lamps must be mounted no less than 15 inches above the roadway and the front lamps must be amber. Turn signals are not required on motorized bicycles.

Modulating Headlamp (25251.2). Any motorcycle may be equipped with a means of modulating the upper beam of the headlamp between a high and a lower brightness at a rate of 200 to 280 flashes per minute. Such headlamps shall not be so modulated during darkness.

Area Reflectorizing Material (25500). Area reflectorizing material may be displayed on any vehicle, provided: the color red is not displayed on the front; designs do not tend to distort the length or width of the vehicle, nor resemble official traffic control devices, except that alternate striping resembling a barricade pattern may be used.

Headlamps on Motorcycles (24252, 24400, 24406, 24407, 24410, 25650, 25650.5). Every motorcycle manufactured and first registered on and after January 1, 1978, shall be equipped with at least one and not more than two headlamps which automatically turn on when the engine is started and remain lighted as long as the engine is running. Headlamps are not required on other motorcycles except during darkness, when every motorcycle shall be equipped with not more than two lighted white multiple-beam headlamps. Single-beam headlamps are permitted on motorcycles sold prior September 19, 1940, and on motor-driven cycles. The headlamps shall be mounted on the front of the motorcycle between 22 and 54 inches above the roadway. All lamps must be properly maintained.

Headlamps on Motor-driven Cycles and Motorized Bicycles (24252, 24406, 24407, 24410, 25651). The headlamps may be of single-beam or multiple-beam type, but when the vehicle is

operated during darkness, the headlamp shall comply with the requirements and limitations as follows:

(a) The headlamp shall be of sufficient intensity to reveal a person or a vehicle at a distance of not less than 100 feet when the motor-driven cycle is operated at any speed less than 25 miles per hour and at a distance of not less than 200 feet when operated at a speed of 25 to not exceeding 35 miles per hour, and at a distance of 300 feet when operated at a speed greater than 35 miles per hour.

(b) In the event the motor-driven cycle is equipped with a multiple-beam headlamp, the upper beam shall meet the minimum requirements set forth above and the lower-most beam shall be so aimed and of sufficient intensity to reveal a person or vehicle at a distance of at least 100 feet ahead. The high intensity portion of the beam under no condition shall be directed to strike the eyes of an approaching driver.

(c) In the event the motor-driven cycle is equipped with a signal-beam lamp, it shall be so aimed that when the vehicle is loaded none of the high intensity portion of light, at a distance of 25 feet ahead, shall project higher than the center of the lamp.

Colors of Lamps and Reflectors (25950). Unless otherwise provided, lamps and reflectors visible from the front shall be white or yellow except rear sidemarker lamps required by Section 25100 VC may show red to the front. Lamps and reflectors visible from the rear shall be red except that stoplamps on vehicles manufactured before January 1, 1979, and turn signal lamps, and front sidemarker lamps required by Section 25100 VC may show yellow to the rear. Taillamps, stoplamps, and turn signal lamps that are visible to the rear may be white when unlighted on vehicles manufactured before January 1, 1974. Any taillamp, stoplamp, back-up lamp, or turn signal lamp may have an unlighted lens color that is darker than the lighted color, and any such lamps that are in addition to the minimum required number may be white or yellow when unlighted.

Brakes (26311, 26453, 26454). Motorcycles shall be equipped with brakes on at least one wheel. Motorcycles manufactured after 1965 shall be equipped with brakes on all wheels except the wheels on an attached sidecar. Brakes must be capable of stopping the vehicle on a level road within 25 feet at an initial speed of 20 miles per hour. The brakes must also control the movement of, and stop and hold the vehicle under all conditions of loading, on any grade on which it is operated. All brakes shall be maintained in good working order.

Windshield (26701, 26703, 26705). A windshield is not required; however, any windshield sold after January 1, 1969, or installed on a motorcycle manufactured after January 1, 1969, must comply with regulations adopted by the CHP for safety glazing material. Red or amber glazing material is prohibited. Safety glazing material must be used when replacing any glazing material used in a windshield.

Mirror (26709). Every motorcycle subject to registration in California shall be equipped with a mirror so located as to reflect to the driver a view of the highway for a distance of at least 200 feet to the rear of the vehicle.

Horn (27000). Every motor vehicle must have a horn which is audible from a distance of 200 feet but does not emit an unreasonably loud or harsh sound.

Muffler (27150, 27151, 27152, 27153). Every motor vehicle shall have a muffler which prevents any excessive or unusual noise. It shall not be equipped with a cutout, bypass, or similar device. The exhaust system shall not be modified to increase the noise emitted by the motor of such vehicle so that the vehicle is not in compliance with Section 27150 or exceeds the noise limits established for that type vehicle as outlined in the vehicle code commencing with Section 27200. No motor vehicle shall be operated in a manner resulting in the escape of excessive smoke, flame, gas, oil, or fuel residue.

Fuel Tank Cap (27155). The fuel tank filling spout must be closed by a cap or cover of noncombustible material.

Tires (27461, 27465, 27500, 27501). No person shall use on a highway a pneumatic tire which does not conform to the regulations adopted by the California Highway Patrol or which is so worn that less than one thirty-second (1/32) of an inch of tread depth remains in any two adjacent grooves at any location on the tire, except when temporarily installed on a disabled vehicle. Tread depth is not to be measured at tiebars, humps, or fillets. Regrooved tires are prohibited.

Fenders (27600). No person shall operate any motor vehicle having three or more wheels unless equipped with fenders, flaps, or other devices, at least as wide as the tire thread, to effectively minimize the spray or splash of mud or water to the rear. This section does not apply to vehicles exempt from registration, or registered prior to January 1, 1971, and which have an unladen weight of under 1,500 pounds. (Does not apply to motorized bicycles.)

Passenger Equipment (27800). It is unlawful for the driver of a motorcycle or a motorized bicycle to carry any other person thereon, except on a seat securely fastened to the machine at the rear of the driver and provided with footrests, or in a sidecar attached to a motorcycle and designed for the purpose of carrying a passenger. Every passenger on a motorcycle or motorized bicycle shall keep his feet on the footrests while such vehicle is in motion.

Equipment Position (27801). No person shall drive any two-wheel motorcycle:

(a) Equipped with a seat so positioned that the driver, when sitting astride the seat, cannot reach the ground with his feet.

(b) Equipped with handlebars so positioned that the hands of the driver, when upon the grips, are at or above his shoulder height when sitting astride the seat.

Motorcycles Mounted on Other Vehicles (5201, 21700, 24002, 24600, 24603, 24952, 35111, 35406, 35408). If a motorcycle is to be carried on the exterior of another vehicle, particular care must be exercised in the manner of loading to avoid violations of the Vehicle Code or the California Code of Regulations. The motorcycle must be safely loaded and it must not obstruct the driver's view to the front or sides. The motorcycle shall not obscure the license plate or any required lamp or reflector. Turn signals, taillamps, and stoplamps must be visible to an approaching or following driver from directly to the front (or rear) and to 45 degrees to the left (or right) on their respective sides of the vehicle. No part of the loaded motorcycle may project more than three feet beyond the front bumper. On a passenger vehicle, no portion of the motorcycle may extend

beyond the line of fenders to the left nor more than six inches beyond the line of fenders to the right.

Motorcycle Helmets (27803) All persons on a motorcycle must wear a properly fitting safety helmet which is Department of Transportation approved (DOT).