Department of the Secretary of State

Bureau of Motor Vehicles

Safety and Use of Nonconforming Vehicles on Maine's Roadways 2026

Findings from a working group convened to study the safety and use on nonconforming vehicles on Maine's roads and highways.

Safety and Use of Nonconforming Vehicles on Maine's Roadways

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Introduction

The roadway safety of Mainers and those who choose to visit Maine is one of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles' (BMV's) four strategic pillars.

Beginning October 6, 2025, the BMV began convening a working group, as required by 2025 Resolve 29 to perform two overarching tasks:

- Review the operating standards that currently prohibit nonconforming vehicles from operating on Maine's roads and highways.
- Determine if these standards should be amended and if so, to produce verbiage to assist the legislature in the creation of these new standards.

The full resolve can be read in Appendix A of this report.

The findings of this working group are as follows.

Nonconforming vehicles, and their potential to endanger the lives of their drivers and passengers alongside those around them is an avoidable set of tragedies.

While the BMV is understanding of the potential reasons individuals may desire to use non-conforming vehicles, an amendment to the law not only creates immediate issues, but it also opens a proverbial "Pandora's Box".

While it may be legal to import these vehicles, their inability to meet the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) for the year they were first released onto the market makes them a roadway safety risk.

It is for these reasons, which are explained in-depth in this report, that the Nonconforming Vehicles Working Group unanimously suggests no changes to current laws and standards regarding nonconforming vehicles.

This working group met the first and third Monday of each month starting October 6, 2025, until November 17, 2025.

Members could attend in person at the BMV's administrative office, or online via Microsoft Teams.

Voting Members

- Deputy Secretary Catherine Curtis, BMV
- Lieutenant Bruce Scott, Maine State Police
- Charles C. Soltan Esq., Soltan Bass LLC
- Robert Drummond, Owner of Ready Road Service
- Jamie York, General Manager of York's of Houlton
- Sue H. Cote, City Clerk in Sanford, Maine
- Toby Stinson, Development Officer and Director of New England Auto Auction and Curatoria and Maine Owls Head Transportation Museum

Non-Voting Members

- Deputy Secretary Emily Cook, Policy Director
- Director Nikki Bachelder, BMV Vehicle Services
- Director Derek Dinsmore, BMV Enforcement Services
- Assistant Director David Silk, BMV Enforcement Services
- Senior Section Manager Jill Kingsbury, BMV Vehicle Services
- Administrative Assistant Tina Corkum, BMV
- Public Relations Representative Robert Hannan, BMV

Nonconforming Vehicle Operating Standards

The first duty assigned to this working group was to identify the operating standards that prohibit nonconforming vehicles from being operated on Maine's roads and highways.

The working group identified nine laws that relate to nonconforming vehicles within Maine Motor Vehicle Statutes Title 29-A, the section of the law that regards motor vehicles and traffic.

The primary function of these rules is to define:

- Various vehicle groups (antique automobiles, low-speed vehicles and off-road vehicles)
- Where the various vehicles listed may operate
- Inspection standards
- The Chief of the State Police's ability to adopt rules

A full list of each rule and their specific details is available in Appendix B.

After identifying the laws and other organizations' best practices, the working group expanded on concerns with the practical implementation of nonconforming vehicles into these laws.

One suggestion to more easily blend nonconforming vehicles into law was to fold them into a currently existing category, rather than making an entirely new one for them. This became too problematic to continue pursuing.

Antique auto vehicles cannot be used as a primary mode of travel or material transportation, must meet FMVSS for the year of manufacture, must be substantially maintained in original condition and primarily used for exhibitions, club activities, parades and other functions of public interest.

Low-speed vehicles (LSV) must have a manufacturers certificate of origin "MCO" confirming the vehicle meets the federal motor vehicle safety standards for LSVs, and are limited to roadways that have a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less.

Lt. Bruce Scott noted that current law requires all vehicles, even those that are registered legally outside of Maine, must meet Maine's legal standards to be operated within the state.

The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) or a municipality may prohibit the operation of low-speed vehicles on any highway or segment if it determines the prohibition is necessary in the interest of public safety.

Vehicles like Japanese "Kei" Mini Trucks are considered off-road vehicles. Off-road vehicles may not be operated on Maine's roadways by anyone except government entities whose operators received specialized training to safely operate them, under limited circumstances.

All-terrain vehicles, registered through Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IF&W), are required to meet operating standards and laws within Maine, but cannot be registered for road use.

There have been instances of companies outside of Maine who register off-road vehicles outside of Maine then try and transfer those registrations to this state. That is not allowed, and thus cannot be used in the case of non-conforming vehicles.

Maine state inspections, require that vehicles meet the FMVSS to keep vehicles that are registered and inspected in Maine safe.

The safety issues the working group considered with nonconforming vehicles will be expanded on in the next section.

Reviewing Nonconforming Vehicle Safety

The greatest issue with nonconforming vehicles is their inability to meet the FMVSS for the year it was manufactured.

When using a motor vehicle that has been inspected by a licensed inspector, Mainers have an expectation that the vehicle they are in meets safety standards when it was inspected.

Outside of specific instances, such as motorcycles for which there is a known risk and requires specialized training and licensing to operate, individuals use their motor vehicles to transport themselves, other people and their property with the understanding should a crash occur they will be protected by an array safety features.

Additionally, operation of non-conforming vehicles causes increased levels of pollutants to the environment and damage to Maine's roads and highways.

The working group reviewed two different examples of commonly requested nonconforming vehicles.

Military Vehicles

A vehicle style that had been brought to the attention to the Working Group, both for the number of conversations around Maine it has started and its singularity in civilian safety concerns, are military vehicles.

A non-voting member of the working group served in the armed forces and operated Humvees and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles.

He explained that these vehicles contain numerous blind spots, are top heavy and will frequently sway back and forth.

Some of these vehicles will have seatbelts, but none of them have air bags, and all require special training to operate that includes wearing a helmet when operating them.

Military vehicles were never designed to be driven on civilian roads and highways, handling much differently than a standard civilian vehicle.

Figure 1.1: A photo of a military humvee

Figure 1.2: A photo of a military MRAP

Their size makes them infeasible for use by everyday individuals when doing something as simple as utilizing a parking lot.

It's important to note that vehicles like the Humvee have been adapted for civilian use, notably in the Hummer H1 line. These vehicles are made to meet the FMVSS and pass safety inspections.

Lt. Scott also provided insight on this specific issue as it related to both new and older military vehicles through his contribution to the Working Group and a testimony he presented earlier regarding *LD 369: An Act to Allow Repurposed Military Vehicles to Be Registered and Operated on Maine Roads*.

To see Lt. Scott's full remarks regarding LD 369, see Appendix C.

These standards don't just apply to modern military vehicles, but older ones including military jeeps, that individuals purchase that do not meet the FMVSS, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) crash testing or the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) pollution requirements.

These vehicles are suited for things like disaster relief and therefore are used by trained and approved operators on public roads in specific instances, but that use is limited in nature.

The federal Government Accountability Office (GAO) determined there was, from 2010 to 2019, a total of 3,753 accidents including tactical vehicles in non-combat operations.

These crashes resulted in 123 deaths with a full third of the crashes involving the Humvee platform.

In addition, 25% of the total number of crashes were rollovers due to a lack of safety features and limited overhead clearance.

Figure 1.3: A photo of a military Vietnam era jeep

Steel roofing in these vehicles has been found as a primary catalyst of head trauma and death during accidents.

Incidents where a military vehicle collided with a civilian vehicle display a consistent pattern of almost universally catastrophic consequences for the involved civilian vehicle.

According to the testimony of Lt. Scott, an individual is **10 times more likely to die** in a crash involving a military vehicle as opposed to other vehicles.

Japanese Mini Trucks

Japanese Mini Trucks, also referred to as "Kei Trucks" due to their belonging to the Japanese "Kei Jidosha" or in English the "Light Automobile" classification, are the second vehicle that was addressed due to the frequency with which they are discussed regarding nonconforming vehicles and roadway usage.

These trucks do not meet the FMVSS, EPA pollutant requirements or NHTSA DOT crash testing standards and are dangerous to drive.

In Maine, a Japanese Mini Truck is classified as an "Off-Road Vehicle", meaning it cannot be registered for use on the state's roads and highways.

Figure 1.4: A photo of a Japanese Mini Truck

Lt. Scott provided insight on this topic by citing an earlier testimony he provided regarding *LD 63: An Act to Clarify That Certain Imported Motor Vehicles Are Not Off-Road Vehicles*.

To see Lt. Scott's full remarks regarding LD 63, see Appendix D.

Offroad vehicles do not meet the FMVSS, EPA pollutant requirements or the NHTSA crash testing standards.

They often lack safety features like air bags and crumple zones, meaning accidents become much deadlier due to design issues.

Specific crash statistics on these vehicles are difficult to obtain due to the fact that since the vehicles aren't generally allowed on roads, there isn't a general pool of data to pull from that would provide significant figures.

A recent survey done by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) with responses from 31 states saw less than 5% report back that they have any crash or traffic data assessing the safety of mini trucks or comparing mini truck safety to that of other vehicles.

To review the aggregate results of this survey, see Appendix E. To see the entire survey, including individual state responses, you can find the AAMVA Mini Truck Survey at maine.gov/sos/Working-Group-Nonconforming-Vehicles.

These vehicles, when used in Maine, are often found in places including but not limited to farms, campgrounds, theme parks, fairgrounds and other off highway locations.

While it is true that Japanese Mini Trucks can be imported to the United States, the mere act of importing them does not mean they have the ability to be safely or legally operated on public roads.

It is also true that safety features on these trucks have evolved in recent decades, but these features still fall short of the FMVSS and Maine's requirements.

Even if one of these trucks was legally titled and registered in another state to fully operate on its roadways, that does not mean an individual can legally drive it on Maine's roadways.

Nonconforming Vehicles Research and Opinions

2010 BMV Report

It's prudent to mention this is not the first time in recent memory that Maine's BMV has been asked to review the idea of introducing nonconforming vehicles onto Maine's public roadways.

In February 2010, the BMV found in an Alternative Vehicles Working Group Report, among other items, that non-standard vehicle designs must be certified by a professional automotive engineer registered with the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), and that said engineer must certify the motor vehicle meets the FMVSS and EPA standards for its class model and year.

To view the full findings of this report, see Appendix F.

AAMVA Mini Truck Survey

The AAMVA report introduced in the prior section does ask its participants *"Does your state allow minitrucks to operate on public roads? If so, are there limitations or restrictions-e.g., maximum speed limits, weather conditions, purposes of travel?"*.

In total, 27 states and one Canadian territory provided answers to this question:

- **11** respondents (including Maine) stated they do not allow mini trucks on their public roads in any instance.
- **10** respondents stated they allow mini trucks onto their public roads with some form of limitation(s).
- **Seven** respondents stated they allow mini trucks on their public roads with no limitations.

Does not allow mini trucks onto public roadways

- Arkansas
- Colorado
- Delaware
- Iowa
- Maine
- Michigan
- New Jersey
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina

Allows mini trucks on public roadways with limitations

- Alaska
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Louisiana
- North Carolina
- Nebraska
- Ohio
- Utah
- Washington
- Wisconsin

Allows mini trucks on public roadways with no limitations

- British Columbia
- Connecticut
- Idaho
- Mississippi
- New Mexico
  - New Mexico stated it expects to review this decision soon and therefore may move places on this list in the future
- South Dakota
- Texas

Figure 2.1: A breakdown of AAMVA survey respondents' mini truck and public roadway positions

British Columbia Mini Truck Assessment

The working group received a study from Daniel Stern, the chief editor of Driving Vision News in British Columbia, an organization that specializes in producing in-depth reports.

The report provided further insight on mini trucks, and supported the conclusion that these should not be registered for public roadway use,

To view the entire letter, see Appendix G.

Mr. Stern referenced that most of these mini trucks are built to Japanese specifications, meaning they are built as "right-hand-drive vehicles" as opposed the left-hand standard in the US.

Vehicles built for traffic that flows from the left lane also come equipped with headlamps producing low-beam light to best see towards the shoulder which, when driven in countries that flow from the right lane, means that light is directed into the eyes of oncoming traffic and makes nighttime driving increasingly dangerous for both the driver of the mini truck and any oncoming drivers.

While there are some vehicles that do meet the UN regulations for right lane traffic headlamps, others are built into the lamp's optics. This means they cannot be adjusted out, as it is completely separate from the horizontal and vertical aim adjustment of the lamps.

Most vehicles built to conform to non-US standards also lack certain pieces of lighting equipment that the US requires.

Regulations in the US require amber front and red rear side marker lights and reflectors. These must be mounted, to the most practical degree, in the front and rear of the vehicle.

The US also requires a central high-mounted stop lamp, also known as the "third brake light", on its passenger vehicles. These rules were adopted several years after 1993 by Japan and Europe, but many imported vehicles into the US do not follow these requirements as they were built prior to its implementation.

The letter notes that while left-hand-driven specific vehicles are safer when retrofitted to fit US regulations, and that Japanese emissions regulations track closely with US emissions standards and are not as much of a concern, Japanese market enthusiasts do tend to advocate for a blanket approval while dismissing the substantial safety concerns left-lane vehicles present.

The Safety of Right-Hand-Drive Vehicles in British Columbia

Mr. Stern also provided the BMV with a study on the safety of right-hand-driven vehicles.

The study focused on right-hand-driven vehicles that have been on the roads within British Columbia.

To review the abstract of this survey, see Appendix H. To see the full study, you may visit maine.gov/sos/Working-Group-Nonconforming-Vehicles.

Vehicles that are 15 years of age are exempt from the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) for the year they were produced, which led to a developing market for older vehicles similar to that seen in the US and Maine more specifically.

The report focused on two primary questions.

It asked if right-hand-driven vehicles created increased crash risks, and if the vehicles were inferior in comparison to "built-for-Canada" vehicles of a similar age regarding occupant protection potential.

The study then conducted three analyses that all found consistent results.

Right-hand-driven vehicles were found to have a greater than 40% increased crash risk as opposed to left-hand-driven vehicles. This result was found over an extended period of time for policy holders.

The frequently cited argument that drivers will, with time, become familiar enough with right-hand-driven cars to help abate a higher crash risk is incompatible with these results.

While the study also found that right-hand-driven vehicles are not inherently less protected in a crash than left-hand-driven vehicles, insufficient data was collected at the time to determine if considerations such as speed being impacted by driving a right-hand-driven vehicle made an actionable impact.

Additionally, it was determined the incompatibility of the right-hand-driven vehicle's layout with the need to observe and maneuver in traffic built for left-hand-driven vehicles may cause ongoing difficulties.

Georgia Department of Public Safety Press Release

The Georgia Department of Safety issued a press release on July 17, 2025, regarding a 14 off-road vehicle fatalities around the state.

To view the press release, see Appendix I.

Georgia saw accidents happen due to these vehicles hitting trees, losing control and flipping over among other tragic occurrences.

Between January 1, 2025, through June 20, 2025 the Georgia State Patrol investigated 42 crashes involving multi-purpose off-highway vehicles (MPOHVs) and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). These resulted 14 fatalities and 114 serious injuries on Georgia's roadways.

Vehicles that are not equipped with proper safety features, such as mini trucks, would force Maine to reckon with the inevitability of similar circumstances especially should these be made legally allowed to be registered for use on public roadways.

Citizen Submission: Alex F.

The working group did receive a message from a citizen in Kennebunkport who is identified in this report as Alex F.

To see Alex's full message, see Appendix J.

Alex expressed support for the idea of allowing Japanese Kei Mini Trucks to be registered in Maine.

Alex remarked on the vehicles as low-emission transportation options with a "...remarkable fuel economy, minimal emissions and a small road footprint...".

Alex did express concern over the inability to register a Kei mini truck as opposed to something like a 1970s V8 muscle car or lifted pickup, citing outdated safety features and environmental safety standards.

There was also mention that Maine's laws encourage vehicle owners to seek registration in states with more permissive laws. This, according to Alex, creates lost revenue and less transparent enforcement and compliance.

Additionally, the message did acknowledge safety concerns but dismissed them as broadly unwarranted due to the vehicles being used in settings that do not involve their frequent use or use on roadways.

The working group, in its due diligence, considered each of these points.

The FMVSS requires for vehicles to meet the standards for the year it was produced. This federal requirement, which Maine uses as a key guide in its broader inspection efforts, is why vehicles like a 1970's V8 muscle car or lifted truck are legally able to be registered and a mini truck cannot.

Concerns over fuel economy and emissions are commendable, but as a comparison on their own, are not sufficient to create the need to carve out exceptions for mini trucks.

The registering of these cars in other states has been addressed in this paper prior to this point. To reiterate, for a vehicle registered in another state to legally operate on Maine's roadways it must be similar to a resident vehicle that would pass this state's safety standards.

With that in mind, further conversation on the implementation of increased enforcement of existing laws in this specific regard is out of scope for this working group.

The dismissal of safety concerns as broadly unwarranted is, in the working group's opinion, a mistake. For reasons already discussed in this report, the safety of Mainers and those who utilize Maine's roadways will suffer should new exceptions for mini trucks be implemented.

Virginia DMV Mini Truck Report

Virginia is in the process of authoring a report on mini trucks that, at this point, is not available for distribution but does draw conclusions similar to this working group.

The report found, as its recommendation to Virginia's legislature, that mini trucks should not be registered or driven on public roads within the state of Virginia.

Their recommendation is based on available crash data and the mini truck's inability to comply with the FMVSS.

Government Accountability Office Military Vehicle Accident Report

In July 2021 the GAO provided congressional requesters a report on if additional action should be taken to mitigate and prevent training accidents with military vehicles.

To view the report's findings, see Appendix K. To read the report in its entirety, you may to go gao.gov/products/gao-21-361.

The report found that driver inattentiveness, lapses in supervision and a lack of training were among the most common causes of accidents with these vehicles.

This report displays, through nearly a decade of gathered data, that these vehicles are inherently more dangerous to operate.

In total, the report listed it had found 3,753 accidents. These varied in severity from causing deaths to more minor reportable accidents.

The total percentage of these accidents that involved rollovers was 24%. However, the total percentage of rollover accidents that included deaths was 63%.

While not all of these are vehicles one would expect to see on roads in Maine (e.g. tanks) the risk for a Mainer who either attempts to drive, or then must share the road with, a military vehicle is substantial and presents another avoidable risk.

Nonconforming Vehicles Implementation

Issues with Inspection Systems

The working group did consider what a practical implementation of a registration process for nonconforming vehicles would look like.

Should the working group, after all due considerations, choose to move forward with creating a registration carve out for nonconforming vehicles it would open a "Pandora's Box" of issues down the road alongside immediate concerns.

Current inspection standards, as highlighted in MRSA Title 29-A, Chapter 15 §1756. Inspection standards (1) (A-E) require all equipment on a motor vehicle subject to the inspection to:

- Be in good working order.
- Be safely attached or secure to the chassis or body of the vehicle.
- Be mechanically safe.
- Not pose a hazard to the occupant of the vehicle or to the general public.
- Meet the standards set forth by the Chief of the State Police.

By definition, standard inspection rules would not pass nonconforming vehicles and therefore not allow them to be registered for road and highway use due to safety concerns.

If the working group did want to create safety standards by which nonconforming vehicles would pass, it would need to suggest ignoring the FMVSS.

Additionally, a new set of guidelines would need to be released to all licensed inspectors. These would conflict with current general guidelines, creating the distinct possibility for accidental or malicious use of inspection standards that would affect the entire state.

This would also now open up the question of if these vehicles do not need to meet the FMVSS, what else should be allowed to circumvent current safety standards?

Exceptions made for vehicles like mini trucks and military vehicles would then face potential pressure to extend to vehicles like ATVs and dune buggies among others.

A common question is if pushing a set of potentially confusing and contradictory standards onto state certified inspectors would cause general confusion, why not ask Maine State Police (MSP) to instead handle inspections in these circumstances?

In short, MSP does not have the capacity or expertise to enforce over 800 pages of FMVSS and the supporting standards by the SAE. This is not to mention having to navigate any hypothetical standards that conflict with these current rules.

MSP also does not have the capacity or expertise to utilize designated areas, such as inspection stations, as locations for people to approach and ask for vehicle modifications to fit any hypothetical new standards.

Further Considerations

The working group does not believe there is a way to effectively integrate nonconforming vehicles into Maine's roads and highways.

The working group, through its research and experience, is of the opinion that there is no way to create a balance between nonconforming vehicle use and public safety without unnecessarily compromising public safety.

This opinion was formed after reviewing options for:

- Highway safety for nonconforming vehicles and the motor vehicles they share the road with.
- Restrictions on location, annual mileage and driving speed.
- How to effectively register nonconforming vehicles.

Creating an inspection carve out would place undue stress onto the sections of the state that support vehicle inspections and the enforcement of those standards.

It would also, much more tragically, create circumstances for Mainers to face destruction of their property, experience injuries or be killed due to vehicular accidents as the driver of the nonconforming vehicle or any vehicles involved in a multi vehicle collision with it.

Conclusion

The working group approached the topic of introducing nonconforming vehicles to Maine's roads and highways with an open mind. It collected data and used that, alongside the professional experience of its members, to come to its decision.

The suggestion to have no change in the law, meaning there is no carve out or new standards created for nonconforming vehicles to be inspected and registered for road and highway use, was made unanimously.

The working group reviewed current laws and standards, safety, what individuals and entities have done regarding nonconforming vehicles, and the implications of a practical implementation of nonconforming vehicles on Maine's roads and highways.

It is the responsibility of this working group to consider the safety of Mainers and those who use public roads and highways within the state of Maine.

By maintaining the current stance on nonconforming vehicles, the roads are kept safer, state employees and those licensed to perform state inspections are not given a task which may over encumber them, and roadways will not face another potential danger to road users.

Appendices

Appendix A: Resolve, to Create a Working Group to Study the Safety and Use of Nonconforming Vehicles on Maine's Roads and Highways

APPROVED	CHAPTER
MAY 16, 2025	29
BY GOVERNOR	RESOLVES

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

S.P. 498 - L.D. 1209

Resolve, to Create a Working Group to Study the Safety and Use of Nonconforming Vehicles on Maine's Roads and Highways

Sec. 1. Nonconforming vehicle working group. Resolved: That the Secretary of State shall convene a working group, referred to in this resolve as "the working group," to study the feasibility of allowing registration and use by motorists of vehicles currently prohibited from operation on the State's roads and highways, referred to in this resolve as "nonconforming vehicles," including, but not limited to, mini trucks, antique military vehicles and any other vehicle under 10,000 pounds and operated by a holder of a Class C license, and to review the systems and laws in place for antique vehicles. The working group consists of 7 members as follows:

1. The deputy secretary of state for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles or the deputy secretary's designee;

2. One member from the Department of Public Safety, Bureau of State Police, traffic safety unit who is an expert in vehicle safety and emissions standards, appointed by the Secretary of State;

3. One member who is a representative of a motor vehicle insurance company, appointed by the Secretary of State;

4. One member who is a representative of a motor vehicle inspection business, appointed by the Secretary of State;

5. One member who is a representative of a business that imports foreign cars for sale in the State, appointed by the Secretary of State;

6. One member who is a representative of municipalities, appointed by the Secretary of State; and

7. One member who is a representative of a transportation museum with a focus on nonconforming vehicles, appointed by the Secretary of State.

Sec. 2. Duties. Resolved: That the working group shall:

1. Identify the operating standards that prohibit nonconforming vehicles from being operated on the State's roads and highways;

2. Identify the risks of allowing nonconforming vehicles on the State's roads and highways;

3. Review and analyze the safety of allowing the use of nonconforming vehicles on the State's roads and highways, including but not limited to crash safety, vehicle emissions and speed capabilities, and a comparison of the safety of nonconforming vehicles to the safety of vehicles already allowed on the State's roads and highways, including antique vehicles and motorcycles;

4. Review and analyze laws in other states that allow the use of nonconforming vehicles and how the allowance of these vehicles has affected motor vehicle safety in those states;

5. Review and analyze any reports or studies from other states that have considered the subjects of study described in section 1 and how the results of those reports or studies could relate to the State's roads and highways and motor vehicle systems;

6. Consider the most effective way to allow for nonconforming vehicles to be used on the State's roads and highways while protecting the safety of those driving them and other drivers and consider any restrictions on location, annual mileage or driving speed and how to most effectively register those vehicles to indicate such restrictions, including through the use of a system similar to those systems used for antique and farm vehicles;

7. Consider how to implement an inspection system that would ensure that nonconforming vehicles are safe to drive on the State's roads and highways and how such a system might be similar to or different from the State's current inspection systems for motor vehicles and antique vehicles; and

8. Recommend whether to implement the registration, inspection and use of nonconforming vehicles on the State's roads and highways and recommend any related legislation.

Sec. 3. Compensation. Resolved: That members of the working group may not be compensated for their work on the working group.

Sec. 4. Staff assistance. Resolved: That the Department of the Secretary of State, Bureau of Motor Vehicles shall provide necessary staffing services to the working group within existing resources.

Sec. 5. Report. Resolved: That the Secretary of State shall provide a report by February 6, 2026 containing the findings and recommendations of the working group, including any suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. The joint standing committee may introduce legislation for presentation to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature based on the recommendations in the report.

Current Maine Laws Related to Non-conforming Vehicles

29A MRSA, Section 101, sub-section 3. Definition of Antique auto.

"Antique auto" means an automobile or truck manufactured in or after model year 1916 that is:

A. More than 35 years old or is 35 years old or less and more than 25 years old and was registered in the State as an antique vehicle prior to January 2025;
B. Equipped with an engine manufactured either at the same time as the vehicle or to the specifications of the original engine;
C. Substantially maintained in original or restored condition primarily for use in exhibitions, club activities, parades or other functions of public interest;
D. Not used as its owner's primary mode of transportation of passengers or goods;
E. Not a reconstructed vehicle;
F. Not an altered vehicle; and
G. Not an off-road vehicle.

29A MRSA, Section 101, sub-section, 32-A. Definition of Low-speed vehicle.

"Low-speed vehicle" means a 4-wheeled motor vehicle that is able to attain a speed of at least 20 miles per hour but not more than 25 miles per hour and is less than 3,000 pounds in unloaded weight. "Low-speed vehicle" does not include an ATV as defined in Title 12, section 13001. A low-speed vehicle must be originally manufactured and maintained in accordance with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards as a low-speed vehicle pursuant to 49 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 571.500, as amended.

29A MRSA, Section 101, sub-section 47-A. Definition of Off-road vehicle.

"Off-road vehicle" means a motor vehicle that, because of the vehicle's design, configuration, original manufacture or original intended use, does not meet the inspection standards of chapter 15, the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, the United States Environmental Protection Agency's pollutant requirements or the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration's crash testing standards and that is not a moped or motorcycle.

29A MRSA, Section 354. Off-road vehicles

Off-road vehicles may not be registered in accordance with this Title. Vehicles owned and operated by government entities are not subject to the provisions of this section.

29A MRSA, Section 2080. Operation of all-terrain and off-road vehicles

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, whenever an all-terrain vehicle or off-road vehicle is operated on a way, the vehicle and operator are subject to all provisions of this Title, except chapters 5, 7, 13 and 15. Whenever an all-terrain vehicle or off-road vehicle is operated on a way, the operator is not subject to the provisions of chapter 11, except when an all-terrain vehicle is permitted in accordance with section 501, subsection 8.

29A MRSA, Section 2092. Operation of off-road vehicles.

1. Operation prohibited. Unless the specific type of off-road vehicle is authorized to be operated on a public way by this or any other Title, an off-road vehicle may not be operated on a public way or parking area.
2. Violation. A person who operates an off-road vehicle in violation of subsection 1 commits a traffic infraction.
3. Government vehicles. Vehicles owned and operated by government entities are not subject to the provisions of this section.

29A MRSA, Section 1751. Motor vehicle inspection

1. Inspection required. Except as provided in this chapter or section 2307, subsection 1, a motor vehicle required to be registered in this State must have an annual inspection. A person may have a motor vehicle inspected more frequently.

29A MRSA, Section 1756. Inspection standards

1. Inspection standards. Equipment subject to inspection must:

A. Be in good working order;
B. Be safely attached or secured to the chassis or body of the vehicle;
C. Be mechanically safe;
D. Not pose a hazard to the occupant of the vehicle or to the general public; and
E. Meet the standards set forth in rules adopted by the Chief of the State Police.

29A MRSA, Section1769. Rules

1. Scope. The Chief of the State Police may adopt rules:

A. For the administration and enforcement of this chapter
B. To designate periods of time during which owners of vehicles must display or produce a certificate of inspection; and
C. Concerning the inspection of registered special mobile equipment not ordinarily operated over the highway.

Appendix C: Testimony of Lieutenant Bruce Scott of the Maine State Police against LD 369

STATE OF MAINE
Department of Public Safety
Maine State Police
Traffic Safety Unit
State House Station 20
Augusta, Maine
04333-0020

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL SAUSCHUCK
COMMISSIONER

COL. WILLIAM ROSS
CHIEF

LT. COL. BRIAN P. SCOTT
DEPUTY CHIEF

Testimony of Lt. Bruce Scott

AGAINST LD 369

An Act to Allow Repurposed Military Vehicles to Be Registered and Operated on Maine Roads

Senator Chipman, Rep. Williams, and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Lt. Bruce Scott, and I am the Commanding Officer of the State Police Traffic Safety Unit. I am here today to testify on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police in Opposition of LD 369.

This bill aims to allow any demilitarized vehicle under 10,001 pounds to be registered and operated on a public way, without any regard to the adherence of the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, NHTSA DOT crash testing or EPA pollutant requirements. Some military vehicles are specifically designed for off road use only and are not safe to introduce to Maine roads. Many military vehicles are much heavier and less nimble than their civilian counterparts. They are slower, are purpose built for combat and don't have some important safety systems likes air bags, supplemental restraint systems, anti-lock brakes or stability control. They often have tires that are designed for traversing rugged terrain that are not DOT compliant for road use.

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Offices located at: 36 Hospital Street, Augusta Maine
(207) 624-8939 (Voice) (888) 524-7900 (TDD) (207) 624-8945 (Fax)

These vehicles are well suited for battle and disaster relief, so they are currently allowed to be operated on a public way if they are owned and operated by government entities, like the military and law enforcement agencies. The limited use of these vehicles for emergency operations by specially trained personnel mitigates risks to the public, but to allow them to be operated by anyone for any purpose would certainly lead to unsafe conditions for all road users. The uniqueness of these vehicles that helps them absorb impacts and prevent blasts from intruding into the passenger compartment in combat situations creates disadvantages in maneuverability and crash worthiness. According to the Government Accountability Office there have been 3,753 tactical vehicle accidents, in non-combat operations in the US from 2010 to 2019. Of these, there were at least 123 deaths to our service members and nearly 1/3 of these crashes involved the Humvee platform. 25% of those crashes were rollovers and due to the limited overhead clearance and lack of other safety features, many military members struck their heads on the steel roofs of these vehicles causing significant head trauma and at times death. It should also be mentioned that when these military vehicles are involved in collisions with civilian vehicles the results can be catastrophic for the passengers in both vehicles. Many of these vehicles are structurally superior to other vehicles on the road meaning they become lethal weapons that can cause significant damage and or injuries, without sustaining much if any damage to themselves. Statistically it would appear as though you are almost 10 times more likely to die in a crash involving a military vehicle than in other forms of transportation.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 369

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police, I thank you for your time and would be happy to try and answer any questions that you might have.

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(207) 624-8939 (Voice) (888) 524-7900 (TDD) (207) 624-8945 (Fax)

Appendix D: Testimony of Lieutenant Bruce Scott of the Maine State Police against LD 63

STATE OF MAINE
Department of Public Safety
Maine State Police
Traffic Safety Unit
State House Station 20
Augusta, Maine
04333-0020

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL SAUSCHUCK
COMMISSIONER

COL. WILLIAM ROSS
CHIEF

LT. COL. BRIAN P. SCOTT
DEPUTY CHIEF

Testimony of Lt. Bruce Scott

AGAINST LD 63

An Act to Clarify That Certain Imported Motor Vehicles Are Not Off-road Vehicles

Senator Chipman, Rep. Williams, and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Lt. Bruce Scott, and I am the Commanding Officer of the State Police Traffic Safety Unit. I am here today to testify on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police in Opposition of LD 63.

This bill aims to change the current definition of an "off road" vehicle to exempt motor vehicles imported pursuant to 49 United States Code, Section 30112(b)(9). That federal code is simply an exemption to allow the importation of non-conforming vehicles that are 25 years or older. To allow non-conforming vehicles to be registered for use on a public way just because they are old seems counterintuitive to Traffic Safety. Federal law prohibits these vehicles from being imported into the United States because they don't meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) pollutant requirements or the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) DOT crash testing standards. But Federal law provides an exemption when these vehicles are 25 years or older. They don't suddenly become safer to operate on public

ways the year they reach 25 years of age. The American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) recommend that all states ban these vehicles for highway use due to their safety concerns. The lack of safety components like airbags and crumple zones cause some of these vehicles perform very poorly in crash testing. Many of these vehicles are imported and used on private properties like farms, campgrounds, theme parks, fairgrounds and other off highway locations. Most countries that export these vehicles have a reverse excise program, meaning the older the vehicle gets the more expensive it becomes to register, thereby incentivizing owners to get rid of them as they age and replace them with newer, safer and greener models.

Statistics show that right hand vehicles are more than 40% more likely to be involved in a crash than left hand drive vehicles and most of these imported vehicles are right hand drive. Also, the headlights are designed to illuminate towards the left (towards the ditch in other countries) which blind oncoming motorists and these headlights can't simply be adjusted back to the right where they become properly aimed. The entire assembly needs to be replaced so that the reflectors on the inside of the lens are pointed in the right direction to avoid blinding others. In addition to those concerns, we don't have way of knowing why the original manufacturer did not certify their vehicles to meet the safety standards discussed above. We do know that some other countries' laws are less restrictive than ours in the United States where safety and emissions standards are paramount.

To provide some historical information for you, approximately 10 years ago this Committee created a working group of stakeholders that included members of the legislature, the SoS Office, Maine State Police, owners of non-conforming vehicles, auto dealers and other interested parties to look into the feasibility of allowing these types of vehicles to be registered for and operated on a public way. After extensive research and collaboration, the group reported back to the Committee with a finding that non-conforming vehicles of any type should not be allowed to be registered or operated on a public way.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 63

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police, I thank you for your time and would be happy to try and answer any questions that you might have.

Appendix E: AAMVA Mini Truck Survey Aggregate Results

Survey Results

Mini-trucks

Survey Properties

Author	Gilbertson Kristen
Jurisdiction	VA
Start Date	06/May/2024
End Date	03/Jun/2024
Comment	Virginia is looking for your input regarding minitrucks. Please contact Piero Mannino at Piero.Mannino@dmv.virginia.gov with any questions you may have.
Total Responses	31

Aggregate Result

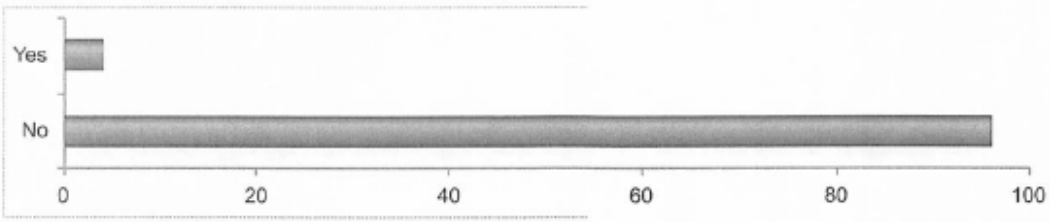
Q1. What does your state call "minitrucks"--i.e., the small-engine, gasoline-powered, four-wheel motorized vehicles, including but not limited to mini-truck, Japanese mini-truck, Kei, and micro-truck?

31 Responses

Q2. Is there a legal (statutory or regulatory) definition of that term that sets out criteria or factors that determine whether a vehicle qualifies? If so, where can the definition, criteria, or factors be found?

30 Responses

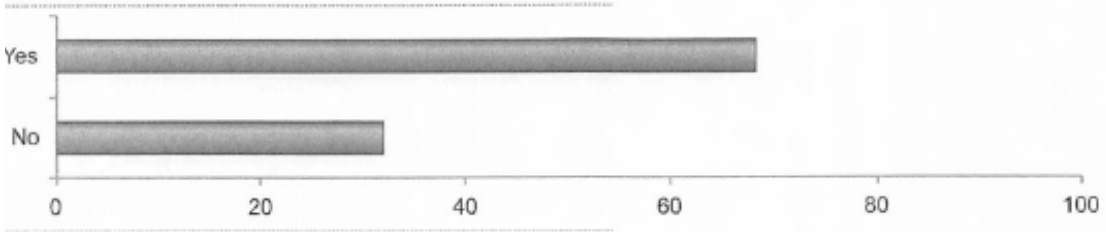
Q3. Has your state collected any crash data or other traffic safety data assessing the safety of minitrucks, or comparing minitruck safety to other vehicles?



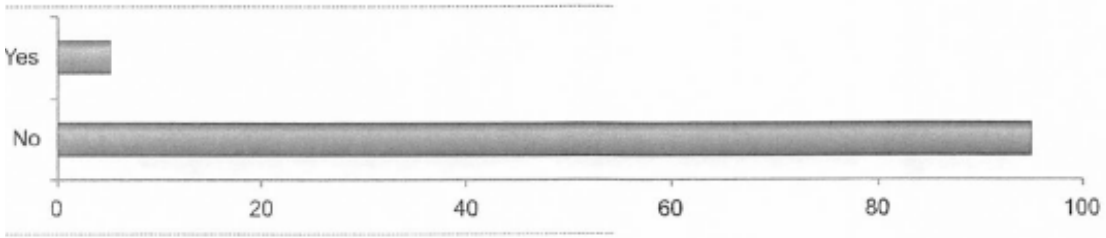
Q4. Does your state allow minitrucks to operate on public roads? If so, are there limitations or restrictions--e.g., maximum speed limits, weather conditions, purposes of travel?

8 Responses

Does your state require minitrucks to comply with the FMVSS, either to be titled, to be registered, or to operate on ic roads?



Does your state have different liability insurance requirements for minitrucks compared to other vehicles?



If your state registers minitruck or other vehicles that are imported using NHTSA's Form HS-7, how (if at all) do distinguish vehicles that are certified to comply with the FMVSS compared to vehicles that aren't?

4 Responses

Appendix F: February 2010 Maine Alternative Vehicles Working Group Report

Report of the
Alternative Vehicle Working Group

Introduction. The Joint Standing Committee on Transportation requested that the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) convene a working group on alternative vehicles (AVWG). The request was made due to the introduction of several bills related to alternative vehicles. These included bills on low speed vehicles (LSVs), medium speed vehicles (MSVs), autocycles, mini-trucks, and modified utility vehicles. The Transportation Committee's request noted that the state and federal laws regarding these types of vehicles are complex, and requested the Bureau to compile and analyze other states' policies.

In its charge to the Bureau, the Transportation Committee recognized the desirability of encouraging alternative vehicles that are more fuel efficient, economical, and environmentally responsible, but which do not adversely affect highway safety. The Transportation Committee charged the AVWG to review state and federal laws regarding various types of alternative vehicles and to make recommendations for possible adjustments to Maine law. The AVWG specifically was charged with focusing on policies related to safety issues as well as potential environmental impacts.

The Bureau was asked to invite participation from the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Transportation, and from the public. Appendix A is a complete list of working group participants.

Between the Transportation Committee's charge and the commencement of the working group's work, a second issue arose. The issue had to do with the on-road operation of homemade and fabricated non-standard recreational vehicles, often called "dune buggies". (The term "dune buggy" is not defined in Maine motor vehicle law. The term is used here to refer to automobile-type vehicles made from older automobile components or fabricated parts.) The AVWG included several members specifically interested in on-road recreational-type vehicles. Since there are many overlapping issues with other alternative vehicles, the "dune buggy" topic was added to the working group's agenda.

The working group met twice. The first meeting was devoted primarily to reviewing federal and Maine motor vehicle safety and emissions regulations that affect alternative vehicles. The second meeting was devoted to reviewing survey results and research, and discussing possible recommendations. The AVWG's meeting minutes and presentation materials are available upon request.

The working group surveyed and reviewed other states' laws relative to LSVs, MSVs, mini-trucks, and recreational-type vehicles. The results are in Appendixes C and D.

Summary. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is charged with establishing safety regulations for the manufacture and importation of motor vehicles intended for highway use. NHTSA is an agency of the United States Department of Transportation. NHTSA tests and adopts safety standards for motor vehicles and vehicle components. NHTSA's standards are appropriate for the vehicle classification. That is, there are lesser standards for motorcycles and low speed vehicles, than for automobiles. Once NHTSA has adopted a safety standard, it is effective for all subsequent model years. (Therefore, determining the correct model year is critical when discussing reconstructed or composite vehicles such as dune buggies.)

The United States Department of Environmental Protection establishes fuel efficiency and emission standards for highway vehicles. Automobiles and trucks sold new in Maine are subject to the stricter California emissions standards.

It is a violation of federal law to manufacture, import, or offer for sale for highway use any motor vehicle that does not meet the applicable NHTSA or EPA standards. Manufacturers and importers apply to the appropriate federal agencies for certification. Generally, these requirements are enforced through the motor vehicle titling process. Motor vehicle titles generally indicate the vehicle type, and whether the vehicle is certified for on highway or off highway use. Maine law prohibits the registration of off-highway vehicles for highway use. (29A MRSA §354.)

NHTSA's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards may be found at:

http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_07/49cfrv6_07.html#501

Generally, NHTSA's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) apply to manufactures, dealers, garages and importers. There are no specific penalties against states permitting non-complying motor vehicles on their public roadways, or for individuals who may construct or alter vehicles: for example, for altering a low speed vehicle to be able to travel at higher speed. However, the EPA theoretically can sanction individuals who tamper with emission controls, or who operate non-complying motor vehicles on the public ways.

Maine law requires motor vehicles to have an annual safety inspection. A vehicle must conform to the safety and emissions standards for its model year. For example, automobiles manufactured after 1966 must have seat belts. Generally, for a composite or altered vehicle, the model year is determined by the vehicle's frame. Engines generally must be of the same family. A "dune buggy" with a shop-manufactured frame is classified by the year the frame was constructed, and is subject to the safety inspection requirements for that year. A dune buggy made primarily with a 1971 Volkswagen frame would be considered a 1971 model year vehicle.

Findings and Recommendations.

Electric/Alternative Fuel Vehicles. Both the technology and the marketplace are evolving rapidly with respect to alternative vehicles. Several companies either offer or soon will offer competitively priced, practical high MPG or electric automobiles. These vehicles are able to comply with all FMVSS and EPA requirements. The availability of high MPG and electric automobiles obviates the need for transitional vehicles such as medium speed vehicles not meeting FMVSS. The recently authorized autocycle also can fill the niche between LSVs and automobiles for a cost effective, fuel efficient vehicle for local travel.

As fuel efficiency increases and different types of motive power become more common, the adequacy and equity of the motor fuel tax becomes an issue. For example, electric-powered vehicles do not pay any motor fuel tax for the use of the highway system. Consideration should be given to developing an equitable and efficient means of taxing automobiles based on highway usage. Prior to about 1992, the fee to register electric-powered vehicles was ten dollars greater than for conventional automobiles.

Maine Laws and Procedures. Maine laws, with respect to LSVs, MSVs, mini-trucks and utility vehicles, are consistent with those of most states. Further, Maine law and policy is congruent with federal safety and emissions requirements. The working group believes that it would adversely affect public safety, and would be a public disservice to deviate significantly from current alternative vehicle policies.

Niche Vehicles. There will be a continuing demand for niche vehicles such as low speed vehicles, autocycles, motorized bicycles, and mopeds. The demand will increase as the price of fuel increases. Maine's current laws comply with federal requirements, and strike a balance between mobility and safety.

Safety. Safety considerations for both vehicle occupants and other highway users must be paramount, and safety standards should be independent of motive power.

Hobbyist/Recreational/Homemade/Non-Standard Vehicles. There are a small group of vehicles, commonly known as "dune buggies" which have been registered in Maine even though some of these vehicles may not meet FMVSS or EPA requirements, or state inspection standards. Most of these vehicles are heavily modified, reconstructed, or fabricated vehicles, and do not conform to any established vehicle class (such as antique, street rod, or custom vehicle.) Many have BMV-assigned VINs. There is a mistaken belief that an assigned VIN constitutes roadworthiness. The purpose of a BMV VIN assignment is to establish that the vehicle's major components are not stolen, and that the ownership documents are in order. VIN assignment does not constitute a safety inspection.

Given the confusion about this type of vehicle, the AVWG recommends that any dune buggy which does not meet applicable safety standards for its model year, and which previously has been registered, should be allowed to continue to be registered by the

same owner, provided the vehicle meets basic safety requirements established by the State Police.

Non-Standard Vehicle Designs. Except for the proposed grandfathering of certain hobbyist vehicles which have been previously registered, homemade or other non-standard motor vehicles which have not received NHTSA and EPA approval should be required to pass a certification process prior to registration. The AVWG recommends that any non-standard motor vehicle be certified by a professional automotive engineer registered with the Society of Automotive Engineers. http://www.sae.org/ The professional engineer should certify that the motor vehicle meets FMVSS and EPA standards for its class and model year. (See Appendix E for a flow chart and Appendix F for draft proposed legislation.)

From British Columbia LD1209 Mini truck Study

Greetings, Ms. Cook and other Maine SOS officers.

I'm a vehicle lighting and safety expert located in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. I've become aware there's something of a kerfuffle regarding vehicles imported to the US under the 25-year rule, which Maine considers off-road vehicles. It seems there's the added complication that certain language in various communications and publications, including letters sent to owners of such vehicles, may have inadvertently caused confusion by appearing to erroneously categorize vehicles like the Mitsubishi Delica as "minitrucks". It also sounds as though vehicle enthusiasts are mobilizing in some sort of opposition.

I'm writing today to provide evidence in support of your refusal to register Japanese-specification vehicles. Here in BC we have a large number of these vehicles on our roads because of our relative proximity to Japan; that country's aggressive policies that make it difficult and costly to register older vehicles; and Canada's 15-year rule (vehicles older than 15 years may be imported regardless of noncompliance with Canada's national safety and emissions standards).

Most vehicles built to conform to Japanese specifications are right-hand-drive vehicles intended for use in Japanese left-hand traffic; as such, they pose a hazard to the vehicle occupants and the general public [viz MRS 29-A Chapter 15 §1756 (1) (D)] when operated in American right-hand traffic. Attached please find a study sponsored by our provincial vehicle insuror, the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, looking at the crash involvement of right-hand-drive vehicles versus substantially similar left-hand-drive vehicles. The primary
finding: right-hand-drive vehicles are involved in significantly more—40 percent more—crashes than their left-hand-drive counterparts. This increased crash involvement is principally due to inadequate and improper sightlines; a driver seated on the wrong side of the vehicle cannot see to safely overtake another vehicle on a 2-lane highway, for just one of numerous examples.

That alone is a sturdy basis for refusing to register wrong-hand-drive vehicles for regular road use, but it is not the only such basis. In addition, vehicles built for use in left-hand traffic (in Japan or any other country where traffic keeps left) are equipped with headlamps producing low-beam light distributions appropriate for left-hand traffic, but not for right-hand traffic. All low beam light patterns are asymmetrical; those for use in right-hand traffic direct most of their light rightward to provide adequate seeing distance down the driver's own side of the road, while limiting leftward light to control glare toward oncoming drivers. Left-traffic headlamps are opposite: most of their light is directed leftward, while rightward light is limited. When left-traffic headlamps are used in right-hand traffic, most of their light is directed into the eyes of oncoming traffic, while the driver has inadequate seeing distance down their own side of the road—another hazard to the vehicle occupants and the general public.

3

Right-traffic headlamps meeting international UN Regulations exist for some vehicles popularly imported from Japan, such as certain versions of the Mitsubishi Delica which were marketed as new vehicles in countries with right-hand traffic. But for numerous other vehicles there are no right-traffic headlamps. This traffic-handedness is built into the lamp's optics—it cannot be adjusted out; it is completely separate from the vertical and horizontal aim adjustment of the lamp.

Furthermore, most vehicles built to conform to foreign standards lack certain items of lighting equipment that have been required on US-specification vehicles for many years, and therefore play a crucial role in making vehicles adequately conspicuous to other road users in North American traffic. Specifically, American regulations require amber front and red rear side marker lights and reflectors on all vehicles made since 1/1/70 (lights _and/or_ reflectors on vehicles made between 1/1/68 and 12/31/69). These must be mounted as close as practicable to the front and to the rear of the vehicle. Canadian standards, which are very nearly identical to the US standards, also require these items, but they are not required by any other country in the world (and if they are present, they are permitted to be amber front and rear).

Similarly, US regulations require a central high-mount stop lamp (CHMSL, "3rd brake light") on passenger vehicles made since September 1985, and light trucks and vans made since September 1993. The CHMSL requirement was adopted several years later in Japan and Europe, so there exist vehicles imported under the US 25-year rule which, by their construction date, would be required by US regulations to have a CHMSL but were not built with one.

Unlike the headlamp situation (if the vehicle was not offered by the manufacturer in a right-traffic market, and it does not use standard-sized headlamp units, then there are no legitimate right-traffic headlamps for it), CHMSLs and side marker lights and reflectors can readily be added to vehicles not originally equipped, in a good and durable manner with easily-available universal parts designed and built to conform to the applicable US regulations.

It is very appropriate that Maine regards Japanese "kei" vehicles—very small cars and trucks that do not meet safety standards applicable to more conventionally-sized vehicles—as off-road-only items not suitable for use in traffic.

It would also be very defensible for Maine to regard right-hand-drive vehicles in general, of any size, as unsuitable for use in general traffic—even if such a vehicle were to be retrofitted with right-traffic headlamps, a CHMSL, and side marker lights and reflectors as applicable—though it would be reasonable and appropriate to make provisions for registering such vehicles specifically for purposes where they are the most suitable and safest option, such as rural mail delivery. For adequately safe

4

compatibility with American traffic, any such vehicle should be required to have right-traffic headlamps, and a CHMSL and side marker lights and reflectors as applicable by the vehicle's construction date.

It would be less defensible, from a public-safety standpoint, for Maine to reject left-hand-drive vehicles imported under the federal 25-year rule. Such vehicles are in virtually all cases built to conform to the UN Regulations which are recognized by the majority of countries outside North America. They differ in some details of their technical prescriptions, but on the whole they track very closely with the intent of the various US regulations in ensuring adequate safety performance in a vehicle's various systems, components, and design aspects, and in numerous analyses over many years have been found to provide safety performance at least equivalent overall to the US regulations. With the exception of the lighting incompatibilities described above, and the inherent incompatibility posed by a wrong-side driver position, the same is true of the Japanese regulations—which were brought into line with the UN Regulations some years ago. The attached ICBC vehicle safety study confirms this in its finding that while right-hand-drive vehicles crash more often in right-hand-traffic, the crashes are not more severe and not more injurious to the vehicle occupants compared to the Canadian-specification vehicles—which, again, are substantially identical to US-specification vehicles.

The same is true of UN and Japanese emissions regulations, which differ in the particular details but have been tracking closely with US emissions standards for quite a few years now.

It should also be noted that there are a great many left-hand-drive vehicles in Japan, where such vehicles are considered such a status symbol that a number of automakers market brand-new left-hand-drive vehicles there. They are equipped with left-traffic headlamps, but apparently the Japanese Government is unconcerned with the safety threat posed by wrong-hand-drive vehicles. Nevertheless, this creates a significant pool of left-hand-drive vehicles fundamentally safe to operate in American traffic (once they have been retrofitted with right-traffic headlamps and the missing conspicuity lights and reflectors).

The dismissive attitude enthusiasts fixated on specific Japanese-market vehicles tend to take toward the substantial safety issues with the vehicles they think they want is exactly why it is reasonable and proper for the state to set and enforce requirements for vehicles to be used in public traffic. The competing interests of public safety and individual freedom can best be balanced by adjusting Maine's requirements such that:

• Left-hand-drive vehicles imported under the 25-year rule are eligible for regular registration, provided they are equipped with right-hand-traffic headlamps and the conspicuity devices required on this continent (CHMSL, side marker lights and reflectors), and

• Japanese "kei" vehicles and similar miniature vehicles are not eligible for registration, and

• Right-hand-drive vehicles imported under the 25-year rule are eligible for registration only in carefully limited circumstances: rural mail or similar delivery service, and perhaps as collector vehicles with usage constrained to legitimate collector-vehicle activities and a requirement that anyone registering such a vehicle must also maintain registration and insurance on a left-hand-drive vehicle.

I hope these thoughts are helpful to you in resolving the current quagmire; perhaps the ICBC safety study can provide some sturdy backing for your decision to rescind the registration of right-hand-drive vehicles. By way of background, I was hired some years ago to write an imported-vehicle lighting inspection protocol for the province of BC, which was well received and is still in use. It was crafted specifically to handle exactly the lighting incompatibilities described in this email. I have also written extensively on the compatibility of vehicles built to UN specifications with American traffic systems designed around the assumption of vehicles built to US specifications.

I have attached my CV, and welcome your further conversation on these matters.

Cheers from across the continent,

-Daniel Stern

THE SAFETY OF RIGHT-HAND-DRIVE VEHICLES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Peter Cooper, Wayne Meckle, Glenyth Nasvadi, Sandi Wiggins

Abstract

The number of older, right-hand drive vehicles on BC roads has been proliferating in the last few years. Imported vehicles over 15 years of age are exempt in Canada from complying with Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) applicable to their years of production. This has led to a developing market for older vehicles from countries such as Japan. But while mechanical inspections are carried out on such out-of-province vehicles before they can be registered in BC, vehicles from countries that drive on the left side of the road (such as Japan) retain their right-hand-drive (RHD) control configuration.

The concern with these vehicles is two-fold:

1. Does the RHD configuration lead to increased risk of crash involvement?
2. Are these vehicles inferior in comparison with built-for-Canada vehicles of a similar age, with respect to occupant protection potential?

Very few, if any, studies have been done in other jurisdictions to address issues around driving with opposite-side controls. Some studies have been conducted to examine vehicle age effects but these mainly relate to maintenance problems and the characteristics of drivers who operate older vehicles. Nothing in the literature directly addresses the issue currently being faced in BC.

The study reported in this document was designed to fill the information gap referred to above. Three separate methodologies were utilized in approaching the two questions of vehicle compatibility with BC conditions: a relative risk analysis where RHD and LHD crash rates were compared for the same group of drivers; a "survival" analysis where time-to-first-crash was compared between RHD and LHD drivers: and a multiple regression model where RHD vehicle driver risk was compared to that of a similarly-constituted comparison group of LHD vehicle drivers.

The results of all three analyses were consistent. RHD vehicles had a greater than 40% increased risk of crashing over that of similar LHD vehicles. And this level of risk was applicable over an extended period of time for policy-holders. This would suggest that it's more than just an issue of driver unfamiliarity with RHD which should disappear in time. The incompatibility of the vehicle layout with the driver need to observe and manoeuvre in right-side traffic may cause ongoing difficulties.

However, from the perspective of occupant protection, no evidence could be found to suggest that the RHD vehicles were inferior. Crashes involving RHD vehicles were no more severe than those involving LHD vehicles only. However, there was insufficient detail on vehicle usage characteristics to rule out the possibility of different driving purposes which could impact such things as speed. A further study which attempted to obtain and match vehicle data by design elements and driving exposure quantity/quality would be required once more years of comparison were accumulated.

From Georgia

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
TRUST | FORTITUDE | COMPASSION | PROFESSIONALISM

JULY 17, 2025

Fourteen Off-Road Vehicle Fatalities Statewide: Georgia Troopers Urge Caution with ATVs, Golf Carts, and MPOHVs

(ATLANTA, GA) – With the summer season in full swing, the Georgia Department of Public Safety (DPS) is reminding everyone to stay safe when using multipurpose off-highway vehicles (MPOHVs), all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), low-speed vehicles (LSVs), and golf carts.

Between January 1 through June 20, 2025, the Georgia State Patrol investigated 42 crashes involving MPHOVs and ATVs, resulting in 13 fatalities (14 statewide) and 64 serious injuries (114 statewide) on Georgia's roadways. Of the 14 fatalities, eight involved MPOHVs and six were ATVs.

One tragic incident occurred on May 31, in Southeast Georgia, when a 16-year-old passenger on an ATV was killed after the vehicle left the road and hit a tree. Another fatal crash occurred when a 39-year-old driver was found deceased under an overturned MPOHV on private property in Middle Georgia on June 17, 2025.

"These vehicles can be fun and useful on trails, private land, and designated county roads. But they come with serious risks—especially when not operated safely," said Colonel William W. Hitchens III, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Safety.

On December 1, 2023, the Motor Vehicle Division of the Georgia Department of Revenue implemented the voluntary registration of multipurpose off-highway vehicles (MPOHVs) for use on county roads and began issuing metal license plates. Registered MPOHVs must have features specifically intended for utility use and meet several specifications. MPOHVs can only be driven on county roads and may cross city streets or state highways. Requirements for registration exclude vehicles with straddle seats, such as dirt bikes, three-wheelers, four-wheelers (ATVs), and any other vehicles with handlebar steering, straddle seats, or less than four wheels. Unregistered MPOHVS may continue to use vehicles solely for off-road purposes.

The Department of Public Safety encourages all drivers and riders of these vehicles to learn and follow the safety guidelines recommended for each. Keep in mind, all applicable traffic laws are subject to the same insurance requirements and moving violations as other vehicles, such as driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and distracted driving.

NOTE: The attached spreadsheet explains the different types of off-highway, all-terrain, and low-speed vehicles, including golf carts and personal transportation vehicles, and their requirements.

CONTACT

DPS Public Information Office

(404) 624-7597

gsppio@gsp.net (mailto:gsppio@gsp.net)

Related Files

MPOHV - ATV - Golf Carts - LSV - PTV Comparison Chart (/document/document/mpohv-atv-golf-carts-lsv-ptv-comparison-chart/download) (PDF, 175.9 KB)

Appendix J: Citizen Submission: Alex F.

From: Alex F
Sent: Tuesday, July 29, 2025 2:47 PM
To: Curtis, Catherine <Catherine.Curtis@maine.gov>
Subject: Comment Submission - SP 498 – LD 1209

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the State of Maine Mail System. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Deputy Secretary Curtis,

My name is Alex F and I am a full-time resident of Kennebunkport. I am writing in regard to SP 498 – LD 1209, "Resolve, to Establish a Working Group to Study the Use and Safety of Lightweight and Fuel-efficient Vehicles." I want to commend the state's leadership for recognizing the need for a more thoughtful, evidence-based approach to regulating small imported vehicles, including Japanese domestic market (JDM) vehicles such as Kei trucks.

As you know, Maine's prohibition on the registration of certain small, imported vehicles has had an outsized impact on collectors, rural Mainers, and environmentally conscious drivers alike. These vehicles, while small, are designed with efficiency and utility in mind. The Kei class was created in post-war Japan to promote compact, low-emission transportation. With engines capped at 660cc, Kei vehicles offer remarkable fuel economy, minimal emissions, and a small road footprint, all features that should be embraced in the face of growing concerns around climate change and fuel consumption.

It's disheartening that a driver can legally register and operate a 1970s-era V8 muscle car or a lifted pickup with outdated safety features, while being denied the opportunity to register a 1990s-era Kei truck that was explicitly engineered to meet strict environmental and safety standards. This regulatory inconsistency undermines both road safety logic and consumer trust.

Moreover, the ban may inadvertently encourage vehicle owners to seek registration in states with more permissive laws - New Hampshire, Montana, and others - thereby removing potential tax and registration revenues from Maine. It also encourages less transparency in enforcement and compliance, which could negatively affect road safety and insurance standards.

While concerns around crashworthiness are valid (though, ultimately, broadly unwarranted), they should be weighed against vehicle usage patterns. Many of these vehicles are used in rural or agricultural settings, driven at low speeds, and/or registered

as antiques or limited-use vehicles, further reducing any meaningful safety risk to the public.

For all these reasons, I strongly support the legislature's resolve to convene a working group to reevaluate this policy and consider a more equitable and nuanced framework for registering lightweight, fuel-efficient, and imported vehicles. I urge your office to ensure that this process includes voices from collectors, small farmers, environmental advocates, and automotive safety experts who can provide a well-rounded perspective.

Thank you for your continued service to the people of Maine and for your dedication to road safety and consumer protection. I am confident that with your leadership, Maine can find a balanced approach that promotes both public safety and personal freedom while encouraging environmental responsibility.

Sincerely,

Alex

Appendix K: Government Accountability Office Military Vehicle Accident Report

GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of GAO-21-361, a report to congressional requesters

July 2021

MILITARY VEHICLES

Army and Marine Corps Should Take Additional Actions to Mitigate and Prevent Training Accidents

Why GAO Did This Study

Tactical vehicles are used to train military personnel and to achieve a variety of missions. Both the Army and Marine Corps have experienced tactical vehicle accidents that resulted in deaths of military personnel during non-combat scenarios.

GAO was asked to review issues related to the Army's and Marine Corps' use of tactical vehicles. Among other things, this report examines (1) trends from fiscal years 2010 through 2019 in reported Army and Marine Corps tactical vehicle accidents, deaths, and reported causes; and evaluates the extent to which the Army and Marine Corps have (2) taken steps to mitigate and prevent accidents during tactical vehicle operations; and (3) provided personnel with training to build the skills and experience needed to drive tactical vehicles. GAO analyzed accident data from fiscal years 2010 through 2019 (the most recent full year of data at the time of analysis); reviewed documents; and interviewed officials from a non-generalizable sample of units and training ranges selected based on factors, such as locations where accidents occurred.

What GAO Recommends

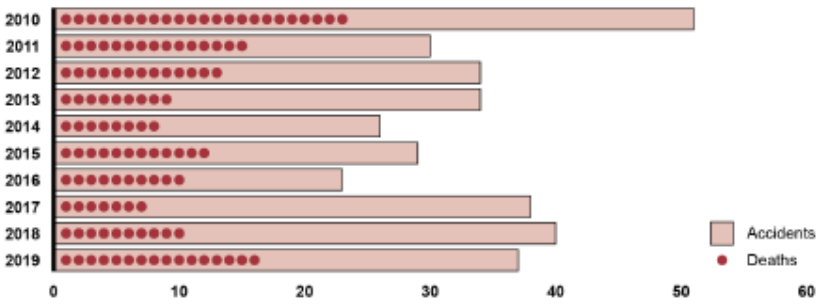
GAO is making 9 recommendations to the Department of Defense, including that the Army and Marine Corps more clearly define roles and establish procedures and mechanisms to help supervisors enhance tactical vehicle safety; and develop performance criteria and measurable standards for driver training programs. The department concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View GAO-21-361. For more information, contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431 or russello@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The number of serious accidents involving Army and Marine Corps tactical vehicles, such as tanks and trucks, and the number of resulting deaths, fluctuated from fiscal years 2010 through 2019 (see figure). Driver inattentiveness, lapses in supervision, and lack of training were among the most common causes of these accidents, according to GAO analysis of Army and Marine Corps data.

Number of Army and Marine Corps Class A and B Tactical Vehicle Accidents and Resulting Military Deaths, Fiscal Years 2010 through 2019



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-21-361

Note: Class A and B accidents have the most serious injuries and financial costs.

The Army and Marine Corps established practices to mitigate and prevent tactical vehicle accidents, but units did not consistently implement these practices. GAO found that issues affecting vehicle commanders and unit safety officers hindered Army and Marine Corps efforts to implement risk management practices. For example, the Army and Marine Corps had not clearly defined the roles or put procedures and mechanisms in place for first-line supervisors, such as vehicle commanders, to effectively perform their role. As a result, implementation of risk management practices, such as following speed limits and using seat belts, was ad hoc among units.

The Army and Marine Corps provide training for drivers of tactical vehicles that can include formal instruction, unit licensing, and follow-on training, but their respective programs to build driver skills and experience had gaps. GAO found that factors, such as vehicle type and unit priorities, affected the amount of training that vehicle drivers received. Further, licensing classes were often condensed into shorter periods of time than planned with limited drive time, and unit training focused on other priorities rather than driving, according to the units that GAO interviewed. The Army and Marine Corps have taken steps to improve their driver training programs, but have not developed a well-defined process with performance criteria and measurable standards to train their tactical vehicle drivers from basic qualifications to proficiency in diverse driving conditions, such as driving at night or over varied terrain. Developing performance criteria and measurable standards for training would better assure that Army and Marine Corps drivers have the skills to operate tactical vehicles safely and effectively.

United States Government Accountability Office