
Michigan Motorcycle Laws Guide for Motorcycle Operators

All motorcyclists must follow the general rules of the road. Detailed here are the specific motorcycle laws.

Motorcycle means every motor vehicle having a saddle or seat for the use of a rider and designed to travel on not more than 3 wheels in contact with the ground but excluding a tractor. **MCL 257.31.**

Moped means a 2- or 3-wheeled vehicle to which is equipped with a motor that does not exceed 100 cubic centimeters piston displacement, cannot propel the vehicle at a speed greater than 30 miles per hour on a level surface, and its power drive system does not require the operator to shift gears. **MCL 257.32b.**

Autocycle means a motorcycle that is equipped with safety belts, roll bar or roll hoops, handlebars or a steering wheel, and equipment otherwise required on a motorcycle, has not more than 3 wheels in contact with the roadway at any 1 time, and is not equipped with a straddle seat. **MCL 257.25a.**

Endorsements and Temporary Instruction Permits

Operating with a Temporary Instruction Permit (TIP). A person with a TIP may operate a motorcycle for 180 days and must:

- Carry the permit.
- Be under the constant visual supervision of a licensed motorcycle operator who is at least 18 years of age.
- Not operate the motorcycle at night.
- Not operate the motorcycle with a passenger.

A person shall not be eligible for more than two TIPs in a 10-year period. **MCL 257.306(5).**

Motorcycle endorsement. A person, before operating a motorcycle, other than an autocycle, upon a public street or highway, shall procure a motorcycle endorsement on his or her operator's or chauffeur's license.

A person who violates subsection (1) is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable as follows:

- For a first violation, by imprisonment of not more than 90 days or a fine of not more than \$500.00, or both.
- For a violation that occurs after a prior conviction, by imprisonment of not more than 1 year or a fine of not more than \$1,000.00, or both. **MCL 257.312a.**

3-Wheeled motorcycle*. An endorsement issued to operate a 3-wheeled motorcycle, other than an autocycle, is restricted to that operation and does not permit operation of a 2-wheeled motorcycle. **MCL 257.312b(3).**

**3-wheel License Restriction Code: 20*

Civil Infractions Specific to Motorcycles

Registration (license) plate; attachment to vehicle; legibility.

(1) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection and subsection (6), a registration plate issued for a vehicle shall be attached to the rear of the vehicle. (2) A registration plate shall at all times be securely fastened in a horizontal position to the vehicle for which the plate is issued so as to prevent the plate from swinging. The plate shall be attached at a height of not less than 12 inches from the ground, measured from the bottom of the plate, in a place and position that is clearly visible. The plate shall be maintained free from foreign materials that obscure or partially obscure the registration information and in a clearly legible condition. **MCL 257.225.**

Parents or guardians. The parent or guardian of a minor shall not authorize or knowingly permit the child to violate the laws applicable to motorcycles. **MCL 257.656.**

Helmet use; motorcycle operators.

A motorcycle operator is required to wear an approved crash helmet unless he or she:

- Is at least 21 years old,
- Has at least \$20,000 in first-party medical benefits insurance in effect, and
- Has held a motorcycle endorsement for at least two years, or has passed an approved motorcycle safety course. **MCL 257.658(5).**

Helmet use; motorcycle passengers.

A motorcycle passenger is required to wear an approved crash helmet unless he or she:

- Is at least 21 years old, and
- Has at least \$20,000 in first-party medical benefits insurance in effect in addition to the insurance that is required of the motorcycle operator. **MCL 257.658(5).**

Crash helmet standards. When required, all helmets must meet the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) standards.

Mich. Admin. Code, R 28.951.

Riding on seat of motorcycle; multiple riders.

(1) A motorcycle operator must ride upon and astride a permanent and regular seat attached to that vehicle. (2) A motorcycle or moped shall not be used to carry more persons at one time than the number for which it is designed and equipped. **MCL 257.658.**

Seats and foot rests. A motorcycle shall be equipped with adequate seats and securely attached foot rests or pegs for each designated seating position. Unless unable to do so because of a permanent physical disability, a passenger shall not ride on a motorcycle unless his or her feet can rest on the foot rests or pegs.

MCL 257.658a(1).

Carrying packages. A moped or motorcycle operator shall not carry any package, bundle, or article that prevents the driver from keeping both hands upon the handlebars of the vehicle.

MCL 257.661.

Handlebars of motorcycle. A person shall not operate a motorcycle or moped equipped with handlebars that are higher than 30 inches from the lowest point of the undepressed saddle to the highest point of the handle grips. **MCL 257.661a.**

Interference with normal flow of vehicular traffic. (1) A person, without authority, shall not block, obstruct, impede, or otherwise interfere with the normal flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic upon a public street or highway in this state, by means of a barricade, object, or device, or with his or her person. **MCL 257.676b.**

Pass between lines of traffic. (4) A person operating a motorcycle, moped, low-speed vehicle, electric personal assistive mobility device, or electric skateboard shall not pass between lines of traffic, but may pass on the left of traffic moving in his or her direction in the case of a 2-way street or on the left or right of traffic in the case of a 1-way street, in an unoccupied lane. **MCL 257.660.**

Limited access highways. A person shall not operate a motorcycle with less than a 125 cubic centimeter engine or moped on a limited access highway. **MCL 257.679a.**

Equipment Laws

Head lamps; number; modulator; height.

(2) A motorcycle or moped shall be equipped with at least 1 and not more than 2 head lamps that comply with this chapter. (3) A motorcycle or moped head lamp may be wired or equipped to allow either its upper beam or its lower beam, but not both, to modulate from a higher intensity to a lower intensity. A head lamp modulator installed on a motorcycle or moped with 2 head lamps shall be wired in a manner to prevent the head lamps from modulating at different rates or not in synchronization with each other. A head lamp modulator installed on a motorcycle or moped shall meet the standards prescribed in 49 CFR 571.108. (4) Every head lamp upon a motor vehicle shall be located at a height measured from the center of the head lamp of not more than 54 inches nor less than 24 inches above the level surface upon which the vehicle stands. **MCL 257.685.**

Clearance/marker lamps and reflectors; color.

(a) Those mounted on the front or on the side near the front of a vehicle shall display or reflect an amber color.

- (b) Those mounted on the rear or on the sides near the rear of a vehicle shall display or reflect a red color.
- (c) All lighting devices and reflectors mounted on the rear of any vehicle shall display or reflect a red color, except the stop light or other signal device, which may be red or amber, and except that the light illuminating the license plate shall be white. **MCL 257.689.**

Spot lamps; fog lamps.

- (a) A motorcycle shall not be equipped with more than 1 spot lamp, and every lighted spot lamp shall be so aimed and used upon approaching another vehicle that no part of the beam will be directed into the eyes of the approaching driver. Spot lamps may not emit other than either a white or amber light.
- (b) A motor vehicle may be equipped with not more than 2 fog lamps mounted on the front at a height of not less than 12 inches nor more than 30 inches above the level surface upon which the vehicle stands. **MCL 257.696.**

Rear stop lamps. A motorcycle or moped shall be required to have 1 rear stop lamp. **MCL 257.697b.**

Side, fender, running, courtesy, and backing lamps; reflectors; flashing, oscillating, or rotating lights; violation as civil infraction.

A lamp or a part designed to be a reflector, if visible from the front, shall display or reflect a white or amber light; if visible from either side, shall display or reflect an amber or red light; and if visible from the rear, shall display or reflect a red light, except as otherwise provided by law. **MCL 257.698(4).**

Brake equipment. (b) A motorcycle or moped when operated upon a highway shall be equipped with at least 2 brakes, 1 on the front wheel and 1 on the rear wheel, that may be operated by hand or foot. **MCL 257.705.**

Horn or other warning device. (a) A motorcycle or moped, when operated upon a highway shall be equipped with a horn in good working order and capable of emitting sound audible under normal conditions from a distance of not less than 200 feet but a horn or other warning device shall not emit an unreasonably loud or harsh sound or a whistle. **MCL 257.706.**

Muffler, engine, and exhaust system.

(1) A motorcycle or moped, shall at all times be equipped with a muffler in good working order and in constant operation to prevent excessive or unusual noise and annoying smoke. A person shall not remove, destroy, or damage any of the baffles contained in the muffler, nor shall a person use a muffler cutout, bypass, or similar device upon a motorcycle or moped on a highway or street. **MCL 257.707.**

Noise limitations; prohibitions. (1) After April 1, 1978, a motor vehicle shall not be operated or driven on a highway or street if the motor vehicle produces total noise exceeding 1 of the following limits at a distance of 50 feet except as provided in subdivision (b)(iii): (b) A motorcycle or a moped:

- (i) 86 DBA if the maximum lawful speed on the highway or street is greater than 35 miles per hour.
- (ii) 82 DBA if the maximum lawful speed on the highway or street is not more than 35 miles per hour.
- (iii) 95 DBA under stationary run-up test at 75 inches. **MCL 257.707c.**

Mirrors. All motor vehicles shall be equipped with an outside rearview mirror on the driver's side which shall be positioned to give the driver a rearviewing angle from the driver's side of the vehicle. Rearview mirrors may be positioned on the helmet or visor worn by the operator of a motorcycle if the helmet is securely attached to the head of the operator. **MCL 257.708.**

Windshields, goggles, eyeglasses or face shields. A person operating a motorcycle in excess of 35 miles per hour that is not equipped with a windshield, shall wear goggles with transparent lenses, eyeglasses, or a transparent face shield, that is shatter resistant and of sufficient size to protect his or her eyes against airborne materials and other road debris. **MCL 257.708a.**

Tires. (f) A person shall not operate a vehicle on a highway when a tire in use on that vehicle is unsafe as provided in subsection (h). (h) A tire is unsafe if it is in any of the following conditions:

- (i) Has a part of the belting material, tire cords, or plys exposed.
- (ii) Has evidence of cord or tread separations.
- (iii) Is worn to or below the minimum tread level in 2 or more adjacent major grooves at 3 or more locations spaced around the circumference of the tire. Minimum allowable tread levels are as follows: Motorcycles and moped..... 1/32 inch front and rear.
- (iv) Has a marking "not for highway use," "for racing purposes only," "for farm use only," or "unsafe for highway use."
- (v) Has been regrooved or recut below the original tread design depth except in the case of special purpose designed tires having extra undertread rubber provided for this purpose and identified as those tires.

MCL 257.710.

The Michigan Vehicle Code can be found in its entirety at www.legislature.mi.gov.

Office of Highway Safety Planning
P.O. Box 30634, Lansing, MI 48909
Michigan.gov/ohsp
