

Many residents are utilizing “golf carts” on roadways and there are many misconceptions that we would like to clear up. A golf cart has a maximum speed of 20 mph and it does not meet street legal specifications. What is legal are “Low-Speed Vehicles” (LSV’s). A LSV differs from a golf cart in that it:

- Has a 17 digit vehicle identification number (VIN) that conforms to the National Highway Safety and Traffic Administration
- Has a Manufacturer’s Statement of Origin (MSO) that states that the vehicle complies with safety standards set for LSV’s. LSV’s are built with greater specifications than golf carts. Also, golf carts CANNOT be retrofitted to become LSV’s as they will not have this MSO from the manufacturer.



A Low Speed Vehicle must have the following in order to be street legal:

- Basic standard that meets safety requirements (the Manufacturer’s Statement of Origin)
- A minimum threshold of 20 mph and a top speed of 25 mph
- Headlamps
- Front and rear turn signal lamps
- Tail lamps
- Stop Lamps
- Reflex reflectors: one red on each side as far to the rear as practicable, and one red on the rear
- Exterior mirror mounted on the driver’s side of the vehicle and either an exterior mirror mounted on the passenger’s side of the vehicle or an interior mirror
- Parking brake
- Windshield that conforms to the Federal motor vehicle safety standard (AS-1 or AS-5 composition)
- A Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)
- Type 1 (lap belt) or Type 2 (shoulder belt)

Some States have restrictions on where LSV's can be driven based on a set speed limit – most state that LSV's cannot be driven on roadways where the speed limits exceeds 35 mph. Alabama does not have a law that directly states a speed limit. However, State law does specify that a LSV cannot be driven on a roadway where it impedes traffic and law enforcement officers do interpret this as being on a roadway with a maximum speed of 35 mph.

It also important to point out that a LSV is a vehicle and is to be handled as one:

- If your child is not old enough or not licensed to drive a car, he/she is not old enough or licensed to drive a LSV
- You cannot drive a LSV on the sidewalk or stand on the side and drive– all traffic laws that apply to your personal vehicle, apply to your LSV!
- Like your vehicle, your LSV must be tagged/registered by the DMV and be driven by a licensed and insured driver



This is an abbreviated version of the Department of Transportation's 47-page document that outlines golf carts and Low Speed Vehicles: 49 CFR Part 571. This document is available at the Fairhope Police Department as well as online.

\*Some manufacturers promote "golf carts" that exceed 20 mph. If they exceed 20 mph, the manufacturer must increase the safety features according to federal code which then classifies it as a LSV.



**Fairhope Police Department**  
107 N. Section Street  
Fairhope, AL 36532

(251) 928-2385

"Like" us on facebook!