

THE BIG THREE – REGISTRATION, INSPECTION, AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

	Registration	Inspection	Financial Responsibility
General Rule	Transportation Code §502.040—Motor vehicles, trailers, and semitrailers must be registered within 30 days after purchasing a vehicle or becoming a Texas resident.	Transportation Code §548.051—Those motor vehicles registered in this state must be inspected (list of vehicles not required to be inspected found at Transportation Code §548.052).	Transportation Code §601.051—Cannot operate a motor vehicle unless financial responsibility is established for that vehicle (motor vehicle defined in §601.002(5)).
“Autocycle”	Transportation Code §502.004—For purposes of registration, an autocycle is considered to be a motorcycle, registration required.	Required.	Required.
“All-Terrain Vehicles”	Transportation Code §502.140(b)—Cannot be registered for operation on a public highway EXCEPT state, county, or municipality may register all-terrain vehicle that is owned by the state, county, or municipality for operation on any public beach or highway to maintain public safety and welfare.	Not required.	Required if all-terrain vehicle is designed for use on a highway. Not required if all-terrain vehicle is not designed for use on a highway (see definition of motor vehicle in Transportation Code §601.002(5)).
“Custom Vehicle”	Transportation Code §504.501—Special registration procedures for custom vehicles.	Not required; must instead pass initial safety inspection at time of registration.	Required.
“Electric Bicycles”	Transportation Code §502.143—Cannot be registered for operation on a public highway.	Not required.	Not required—not a motor vehicle under Transportation Code §541.201(11).
“Electric Personal Assistive Mobility Device”	Transportation Code §502.143— Cannot be registered for operation on a public highway.	Not required.	Not required—not a motor vehicle under Transportation Code §601.002(5) or §541.201(11).
“Golf Carts”	Transportation Code §551.402—Cannot be registered for operation on a public highway.	Not required; must display a slow-moving-vehicle emblem under Transportation Code §547.703.	No financial responsibility for golf carts operated only as authorized by Transportation Code §551.403.
“Moped”	Transportation Code §502.007—Registration required (treat as a motorcycle).	Required.	Required.
“Motorcycle”	Transportation Code §502.002 and §502.405—Motor vehicle, registration required.	Required.	Required.
“Motorized Mobility Device”	Transportation Code §502.143— Cannot be registered for operation on a public highway.	Not required.	Not required—not a motor vehicle.
“Neighborhood Electric Vehicle”	Transportation Code §551.302—The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles may adopt rules relating to registration. (Has not done so). *If operated under §551.304, no registration required.	Only if required to be registered. (Not at this time)	Not required. *If operated under §551.304, no financial responsibility required.
“Pocket Bike or Minimotorbike”	Chapter 502, Transportation Code contains no provisions for registration.	Not required.	Not required—not designed for use on highway.
“Power Sweepers”	Transportation Code §502.143— Cannot be registered for operation on a public highway.	Not required.	Unclear—sweeper implement itself might not be a motor vehicle, but the vehicle on which it is mounted would be considered a motor vehicle.
“Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles”	Transportation Code §502.140(b)—Cannot be registered for operation on a public highway EXCEPT state, county, or municipality may register recreational off-highway vehicle that is owned by the state, county, or municipality for operation on any public beach or highway to maintain public safety and welfare.	Not required.	Required if recreational off-highway vehicle is designed for use on a highway. Not required if recreational off-highway vehicle is not designed for use on a highway (see definition of motor vehicle in Transportation Code §601.002(5)).
“Street Rod”	Transportation Code §504.501—Special registration procedures for street rods.	Not required; must instead pass initial safety inspection at time of registration.	Required.



Definitions: all sections refer to the Transportation Code

All-terrain vehicle (§502.001/663.001) means a motor vehicle that is (A) equipped with a seat or seats for the use of: (i) the rider, and (ii) a passenger, if the motor vehicle is designed by the manufacturer to transport a passenger; (B) designed to propel itself with three or more tires in contact with the ground; (C) designed by the manufacturer for off-highway use by the operator only; (D) not designed by the manufacturer for farming or lawn care; and (E) not more than 50 inches wide.

Autoycle (§501.008/502.004) means a motor vehicle, other than a tractor, that is (1) designed to have when propelled not more than three wheels on the ground; (2) equipped with a steering wheel; (3) equipped with seating that does not require the operator to straddle or sit astride the seat; and (4) manufactured and certified to comply with federal safety requirements for a motorcycle.

Bicycle (§541.201) means a device that a person may ride and that is propelled by human power and has two tandem wheels at least one of which is more than 14 inches in diameter.

Bus (§541.201) means a motor vehicle used to transport persons and designed to accommodate more than 10 passengers, including the operator; or a motor vehicle, other than a taxicab, designed and used to transport persons for compensation.

Custom vehicle (§504.501) means a vehicle: that is at least 25 years old and of a model year after 1948 or manufactured to resemble a vehicle that is at least 25 years old and of a model year after 1948; and that has been altered from the manufacturer's original design or has a body constructed from materials not original to the vehicle.

Electric personal assistive mobility device (§551.201) means a two non-tandem wheeled device designed for transporting one person that is: (1) self-balancing; and (2) propelled by an electric propulsion system with an average power of 750 watts or one horsepower.

Electric Bicycle (§541.201) means a bicycle that: (A) is designed to be propelled by an electric motor, exclusively or in combination with the application of human power, (B) cannot attain a speed of more than 20 miles per hour without the application of human power, and (C) does not exceed a weight of 100 pounds.

Golf cart (§502.001) means a motor vehicle designed by the manufacturer primarily for use on a golf course.

Light truck (§541.201) means a truck, including a pick-up truck, panel delivery truck, or carryall truck, that has a manufacturer's rated carrying capacity of 2,000 pounds or less.

Moped (§541.201) means a motor-driven cycle that cannot attain a speed in one mile of more than 30 miles per hour and the engine of which: (A) cannot produce more than two-brake horsepower; and (B) if an internal combustion engine, has a piston displacement of 50 cubic centimeters or less and connects to a power drive system that does not require the operator to shift gears.

Motorcycle (§521.001) includes an enclosed three-wheeled passenger vehicle that (A) is designed to operate with three wheels in contact with the ground; (B) has a minimum unladen weight of 900 pounds; (C) has a single, completely enclosed, occupant compartment; (D) at a minimum, is equipped with a steering wheel used to maneuver the vehicle; a propulsion unit; and seats, a seat belt for each vehicle occupant, a windshield and one or more windshield wipers, and a vehicle structure, that are certified by the manufacturer to meet federal requirements; and (E) is produced by its manufacturer in a minimum quantity of 300 in any calendar year.

Motorcycle (§541.201) means a motor vehicle, other than a tractor, that is equipped with a rider's saddle and designed to have when propelled not more than three wheels on the ground.

Motorcycle (§661.001) means a motor vehicle designed to propel itself with not more than three wheels in contact with the ground, and having a saddle for the use of the rider. The term does not include a tractor or a three-wheeled vehicle equipped with a cab or occupant compartment, seat, and seat belt and designed to contain the operator in the cab or occupant compartment.

Motor-driven cycle (§541.201) means a motorcycle equipped with a motor that has an engine piston displacement of 250 cubic centimeters or less. The term does not include an electric bicycle.

Motor assisted scooter (§551.301/551.351) means a self-propelled device with: at least two wheels in contact with the ground during operation; a braking system capable of stopping the device under typical operating conditions; a gas or electric motor not exceeding 40 cubic centimeters; a deck designed to allow a person to stand or sit while operating the device; and the ability to be propelled by human power alone. The term does not include a pocket bike or minimotorbike.

Motor vehicle (§502.001) means a vehicle that is self-propelled.

Motor vehicle (§541.201) means a self-propelled vehicle or a vehicle that is propelled by electric power from overhead trolley wires. The term does not include an electric bicycle or an electric personal assistive mobility device.

Motor vehicle (§601.002) means a self-propelled vehicle designed for use on a highway, a trailer or semitrailer designed for use with a self-propelled vehicle, or a vehicle propelled by electric power from overhead wires and not operated on rails. The term does not include: a traction engine, a road roller or grader, a tractor crane, a power shovel, a well driller, an implement of husbandry, or an electric personal assistive mobility device.

Motorized mobility device (§542.009) means a device designed for transportation of persons with physical disabilities that: (1) has three or more wheels; (2) is propelled by a battery-powered motor; (3) has not more than one forward gear; and (4) is not capable of speeds exceeding eight miles per hour. For the purposes of the Rules of the Road, a person operating a nonmotorized wheelchair or motorized mobility device is considered to be a pedestrian.

Neighborhood electric vehicle (§551.301) means a vehicle that can attain a maximum speed of 35 miles per hour on a paved level surface and otherwise complies with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 500 (49 C.F.R. §571.500).

Passenger car (§541.201) means a motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle, used to transport persons and designed to accommodate 10 or fewer passengers, including the operator.

Passenger vehicle (§545.412) means a passenger car, light truck, sport utility vehicle, passenger van designed to transport 15 or fewer passengers, including the driver, truck, or truck tractor.

Pocket bike or minimotorbike (§551.301) means a self-propelled vehicle that is equipped with an electric motor or internal combustion engine having a piston displacement of less than 50 cubic centimeters, is designed to propel itself with not more than two wheels in contact with the ground, has a seat or saddle for the use of the operator, is not designed for use on a highway and is ineligible for a certificate of title under Chapter 501. The term does not include a moped or motorcycle; an electric bicycle or motor-driven cycle; a motorized mobility device; an electric personal assistive mobility device; or a neighborhood electric vehicle.

Power Sweeper (§502.001) means an implement, with or without motive power, designed for the removal by a broom, vacuum, or regenerative air system of debris, dirt, gravel, litter, or sand from asphaltic concrete or cement concrete surfaces, including surfaces of parking lots, roads, streets, highways, and warehouse floors. The term includes a vehicle on which the implement is permanently mounted if the vehicle is used only as a power sweeper.

Recreational off-highway vehicle (§502.001) means a motor vehicle that is (A) equipped with a seat or seats for the use of (i) the rider, and (ii) a passenger or passengers, if the vehicle is designed by the manufacturer to transport a passenger or passengers; (B) designed to propel itself with four or more tires in contact with the ground; (C) designed by the manufacturer for off-highway use by the operator only; and (D) not designed by the manufacturer primarily for farming or lawn care.

Road tractor (§502.001) means a vehicle designed for the purpose of mowing the right-of-way of a public highway or a motor vehicle designed or used for drawing another vehicle or a load and not constructed to carry an independent load or a part of the weight of the vehicle and load to be drawn.

Street rod (§504.501) means a vehicle: that was manufactured before 1949 or after 1948 to resemble a vehicle manufactured before 1949; and that has been altered from the manufacturer's original design or has a body constructed from materials not original to the vehicle.

Truck (§541.201) means a motor vehicle designed, used, or maintained primarily to transport property.

Truck tractor (§502.001/541.201) means a motor vehicle designed and used primarily for drawing another vehicle and not constructed to carry a load other than a part of the weight of the other vehicle and its load.

Utility Vehicle (§551.401) means a motor vehicle that is not a golf cart or lawn mower and is (A) equipped with side-by-side seating for the use of the operator and a passenger; (B) designed to propel itself with at least four tires in contact with the ground; (C) designed by the manufacturer for off-highway use only; and (D) designed by the manufacturer primarily for utility work and not for recreational purposes.

Vehicle (§502.001) means a device in or by which a person or property is or may be transported or drawn on a public highway, other than a device used exclusively on stationary rails or tracks.

Vehicle (§541.201) means a device that can be used to transport or draw persons or property on a highway. The term does not include: (A) a device exclusively used on stationary rails or tracks; or (B) manufactured housing as that term is defined by Chapter 1201, Occupations Code.